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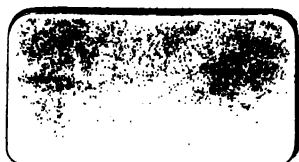
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A DANGEROUS GUEST.



A DANGEROUS GUEST.

BY

THE AUTHOR OF "GILBERT RUGGE,"

"A FIRST FRIENDSHIP," &c.

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TO

The Memory of

AMBROISE GERMAIN,

TO WHOM THIS STORY WAS ABOUT TO BE DEDICATED AT THE
MOMENT WHEN DEATH SUDDENLY CUT SHORT
HIS GOOD AND USEFUL LIFE,

THESE PAGES ARE AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED.

29th December, 1869.



A DANGEROUS GUEST.

CHAPTER I.

THE bright sun of sunny France never ushered in a fairer day, nor climbed a bluer sky, than when it rose over the woods of Fontainebleau one summer morning, a few years back. As the first glow of the dawn stole into the stately galleries of the Palace, and flushed the solemn brows of the marble statues with a semblance of life, the birds in the neighbouring forest awoke and greeted the day with a jubilant anthem. As the sun rose higher, all the multiform life of the great woods was soon awake and stirring.

Timid hares, with palpitating ears, stole across the silent avenues to nibble the sweet grass, and wash their faces in the morning

~~the~~ ~~swarms~~ ~~of~~ ~~bees~~ ~~hopped~~ amongst the boughs ~~and~~ ~~the~~ ~~bees~~ ~~began~~ to hum above the ~~wide~~ ~~river~~. Butterflies fluttered their ~~delicate~~ ~~wings~~ in the early sunbeams; and, ~~in~~ ~~the~~ ~~out~~ ~~symmetrical~~ glades, the large-eyed ~~bees~~ ~~went~~ down to the shadowed pool, ~~raised~~ ~~their~~ ~~slimy~~ noses in the water, and ~~then~~ ~~with~~ ~~heads~~ ~~flung~~ back plunged into the ~~wet~~ ~~regions~~ of the forest, where the day had ~~not~~ ~~yet~~ ~~begun~~.

By the time the mounting sun had reached a certain dial that stood on the terrace of a ~~certain~~ ~~house~~ that overlooked the forest, it ~~was~~ ~~seven~~ o'clock. By that hour the inmates of this house were generally out and enjoying the morning air; but this morning only one member of the family was visible—a young lady, who stood beside the sun-dial with her hands clasped together on its surface, looking out over the forest with a thoughtful face. From her arm hung a large garden-hat which she had taken off to let the morning air play upon her forehead—a wide, well-shaped forehead which overshadowed a pair of ~~patient~~ grey eyes. A black dress, unrelieved

by a vestige of colour, caused her figure to stand out in strong relief against the white dial. So picturesque was the young lady's attitude that an on-looker might have supposed it had been chosen for effect; but such a supposition, let us hasten to add, would have been a decided injustice, for the young lady in question was quite above any small devices of the sort.

Josephine Arnould had other things to think of this morning than producing picturesque effects—things to think of which women of her age are seldom troubled with—prosaic matters of business and household economy far removed from those realms of poetic fancy in which young maidens' thoughts are presumed to wander in meditative moments. At this instant, in fact, Mademoiselle Arnould is engaged in calculating the smallest number of eggs and the least quantity of butter that can be made to serve a family of four persons per week—a practical turn of thought that would have much disappointed any romantic young gentleman who might have beheld her

gazing with those dreamy eyes at the distant forest.

Finding the problem of the eggs insoluble, apparently, Mademoiselle Arnould started off for a walk round the garden. Few gardens in any land could boast a finer show of flowers than that of the late Gustave Arnould, botanist and man of letters. There were reasons why his daughter should feel sad enough at the sight of the lovely things around her; but she was not going to indulge in any idle melancholy this morning. If the future shaped itself after the course she foresaw, she would need good health to meet it; and walking might conduce to that, but melancholy brooding certainly would not.

Mindful of this, Mademoiselle Arnould did not decline the bason of warm milk and the thick slice of bread which her servant brought to her half an hour later. A less sensible or a more selfish young lady might have done so, under the impression that eating was incompatible with the dignified endurance of sorrow, and Josephine Arnould

had great sorrows to struggle against just now.

"Eat away, my angel," said the stout good-natured Madelon—the very type of a handsome Breton peasant, as she stood with her arms resting on her broad hips, regarding her young mistress fondly. "Eat away. That's the way to meet trouble. Starving the stomach won't cure the heart-ache. Thou hadst always a pretty appetite, bless thee."

"Is my mother still sleeping, Madelon?"

"Like a dormouse, mademoiselle. I looked in just now and it was a pleasure to see her."

"That's well. And my grandfather? How shall we manage to keep him out of the way this morning? I have not seen him yet."

"No, no, and you won't yet awhile," said Madelon, with a waggish shake of the head. "I took care to give him a job this morning. 'Monsieur Bertin,' says I, 'do you mean Mademoiselle Josephine to tear all her dresses to pieces, and wound her fingers

every time she goes to the linen closet, because nobody will alter those shelves that stupid carpenter put up last autumn?' The good soul took the hint in a moment, and ran for his hammer and chisel. He's got a job that will last him until noon, I guess."

"You are a cunning creature, Madelon," laughed the young lady. "Don't forget to take grandpapa his coffee, though. And now, as soon as Monsieur Meunier comes, show him into the library, where you will find me."

Mademoiselle Arnould, having finished her sober breakfast, was about to retire to the house, when there came a ring at the bell of the garden door, and a gentleman carrying a portfolio of papers under his arm entered the grounds. Mademoiselle Arnould descended the terrace steps to meet him.

"How kind of you to come so early, monsieur. I hope you did not think my request unreasonable?"

"On the contrary, mademoiselle," said the gentleman,—an elderly man of staid and formal appearance. "I quite understood

your reasons for desiring to see me alone, and I approve them."

"Ah, monsieur, it is impossible to discuss these matters in the presence of my mother, as you know. Her affliction is too recent—her health too much shattered," said Josephine, as she led the way to the library through a window that opened on to the terrace. "You have brought the papers, monsieur, I see? That's right, but let me give you a little more light," and whilst the old notary seated himself at the table, Mademoiselle Arnould threw back the shutters of the two remaining windows.

The bright morning sunlight revealed a very handsome room. It had been the pride and delight of its late possessor. The walls were lined with bookcases of antique form filled with costly books, whilst at intervals was interposed on pedestal or brackets a marble bust or a bronze of value. The whole room exhaled that air of culture and refinement which had characterised all the belongings of their late owner. Monsieur Gustave Arnould, Member of the Academy

of Nîmes, and correspondent of several foreign learned societies, was descended from an honourable Languedocienne family who had once owned considerable property in the neighbourhood of Nîmes, and had played a prominent part in the religious troubles of the Protestant Church in the south of France. He had come a few years back to live at Fontainebleau, in order to be nearer the centres of intellectual and scientific life in Paris.

"It is a shame to trouble your young head with all these ugly details," said the old notary, looking up compassionately at his companion, as he put on his spectacles.

"Not at all, monsieur, if my young head is strong enough to understand them," returned Josephine, with a smile. "Remember, figures do not frighten me. You used to laugh at me for studying mathematics with papa, and call me a little blue-stocking. Let us see if I can turn my knowledge to account to-day."

With that, Mademoiselle Arnould seated

herself at the table with an air that showed she was in earnest.

The business which the notary had to explain to her was the state of her father's affairs at the time of his decease. The next half-hour was passed in examining papers. Mademoiselle Arnould listened to Monsieur Meunier's explanation with close attention, and with an intelligence that readily grasped all details laid before her.

The old gentleman's manner grew more gentle and more serious as he proceeded. He was dreading the final explanation he had to make. But when he came to it, and paused for a moment in his agitation, Josephine put her hand upon his, and said,—

“Spare yourself the rest, my good friend. I can see the inevitable conclusion that must follow from these statements. We can pay our debts, but that is all. There will not be much more than a thousand francs left when that is done.”

The calm voice with which the words were uttered caused Monsieur Meunier to look up in surprise. Mademoiselle Arnould

was very pale, but not otherwise outwardly disturbed.

"I knew that my father had died very poor," she went on, "though I scarcely thought matters were as bad as this. Do you think you have allowed sufficient for what these things will realise?" she pointed to the bronzes and the bookcases; "there are many valuable works amongst them."

"I have put the highest estimate on everything I dare," replied the notary. "No doubt, mademoiselle, the well-known taste of a man like Monsieur Arnould will cause all his property to sell well, if put up for sale in Paris. My calculations are based on that assumption. What a charming head of Sappho that is! It is hard to have to part with such treasures."

It was an incautious speech, and Monsieur Meunier was aware of it, as soon as it was uttered. Josephine turned a little paler, and rising from her seat, went to the window.

"There are harder things than that in store for us, Monsieur Meunier, I fear," she

said, looking out into the sunny garden to hide the tears that had forced themselves into her eyes. "My mother!"

The accent of that last word told where these sorrows pressed most heavily.

"I have been trying to prepare her mind for what is coming," continued Josephine, "but it will be a heavy trial, I fear."

There was silence for some minutes. The voices of the happy birds without sounded harsh and cruel to Josephine at that moment.

"Have you yet thought of—of the future, mademoiselle?" asked Monsieur Meunier, hesitatingly.

The question caused a faint smile to hover over Josephine's pale face. Thought of the future? Of what else had she thought, day and night, for the last few weeks?


"Because, as an old friend of your father," continued Monsieur Meunier, "I was about to suggest that for a time you and Madame Arnould should pay us a visit. My wife will be delighted to offer you hospitality, and it will give you time to look about you."

"This is very generous of you," said Josephine, turning quickly round, and looking with emotion at the speaker.

"Your father would have done as much for a daughter of mine, mademoiselle," returned the old gentleman, delicately. "It will be a charity indeed to come and stay with two quiet old folks who see so little society. You have parted with all your servants, you tell me, except Madelon. Well, the good creature will have to return to her friends in—in the Calvados, is it not? She will feel it, but—" Monsieur Meunier shrugged his shoulders, implying that to resist one's destiny was useless.

Josephine tapped her foot rather impatiently upon the floor.

"It is more difficult," resumed Monsieur Meunier, "to decide Monsieur Bertin's future course. I believe though, he has a small settled income? Yes; ah! well then, you have no special anxiety on that score. Probably he will remain in this neighbourhood, or fix himself in some country place where one can live cheaply.



You, mademoiselle, with your talents, are certain to find an engagement, ere long, either in a school or family. Things might look worse, you see."

"But you are separating us all?" said Josephine, in a quick, reproachful tone. "How can I live without my mother? How could she live without me? And my grandfather, and Madelon? Oh no, no. Even *the other course* is better than that!"

She forgot that that "other course" was known to no one but herself. She forgot in her misery that she was speaking in a tone that must seem ungrateful to the kind friend she addressed. But she was just realising that there was no escape from that other course, and her heart shrank within her at the prospect of what was coming.

"May I ask to what other course mademoiselle makes allusion?" inquired the notary, amazed at this agitated air.

"Yes, monsieur. Your kindness merits our fullest confidence. I will tell you all," said Josephine, with impetuous frankness,

and she stemmed her rising tears. "We are not so friendless as we seem. See here, we have a patron who is ready to pour a fortune at our feet."

She spoke with an air of mockery, and drew forth a letter from her pocket with a quivering lip. She had carried it about with her for three days; but had never yet dared to communicate its contents to any one. And yet this letter was a most kind and friendly epistle, and it had dispelled a miserable fear which had overshadowed her mind of late—the fear of poverty. It bore an English post-mark, and was written in a bold business hand, as follows :—

*"The Iron Works, Monkfields,
North Humberton.*

"MY DEAR NIECE,

"I was gratified by your letter of the 10th, though it was distressing to have such an unsatisfactory account of your late father's affairs. I had felt surprised that, with the exception of the announcement of Monsieur Arnould's death that came to

hand some weeks ago, I had received no communications from your family. Your letter leads me to think that a mistaken delicacy kept you silent. But I am glad your good sense has got the better of that feeling.

“From what I can gather from your letter (which, by the way, would do credit to any English girl) I conclude that your father has not died well off—to speak plainly, that he died very poor. I am very sorry both for you and your mother. Monsieur Bertin, too, has my sympathy, for I know he regarded your father as a son, and loses a home when you lose yours. It is many years since I saw him, and our communications have not been very frequent since my second marriage; but I do not forget that he was the beloved father of my first wife, and that my eldest child calls him grandfather.

“To come at once to the object of my letter. I am about to propose that you should all three come to England and take up your abode with us; not in this house,

for I know how unsuccessful such arrangements mostly turn out, but in North Humberton, and in a house or apartments of your own, which I shall make it my business to procure for you. Of course I should settle upon you and your mother a sum sufficient for your maintenance, and take care that Monsieur Bertin's wants are provided for. I am aware that it will cost you all some pain to quit your country ; but you are compelled, in any case, to give up your old home, and to find a new one somewhere, and I think you will do best to seek it here amongst friends who have the will and the power to help you. I write to you on this subject, instead of to your mother or Monsieur Bertin, because of your better acquaintance with our language. Your clear statement of your father's affairs (as far as you then knew them) satisfies me you will have no difficulty in making out the scope of this letter, which you will please to communicate to your family. e c -

“ Write to me as soon as you have come to a decision, and present my kind

regards to Madame Arnould and your grandfather.

“Yours very truly,

“SAMUEL CRAWFORD.

“P.S. Should you have any difficulty in winding up your father’s affairs, let me know. I will instruct some competent person in Paris to assist you.”

This letter Josephine now translated to Monsieur Meunier, and then looked at him anxiously for some comment thereon.

“It is a kind letter—a well-intentioned letter,” said he; “a little curt, perhaps; but men of business, and of that country, are laconic, you know. Monsieur Crawford is very rich, I suppose?”

“I believe so. They are strangers to me. I have always heard that mamma’s elder sister married a rich Englishman, and went to live in the north of England; but she died a year or two after, and Mr. Crawford married again. I have never known anything of them.”

Josephine spoke in a half irritable, half dejected way, that seemed to intimate she did not want to know anything of them now.

"What do you think of the proposal? Ought we to accept it?" she asked.

She was certain what the reply would be. She had known from the first that there was nothing to choose but this or poverty. But, oh! how she struggled to find some loophole of escape.

"I certainly think it would require very grave reasons to justify your refusing such an offer, mademoiselle," said the old gentleman. "It is not only a home, you observe, but independence for the future that is here offered you."

"But, my mother—the newness of such a life—the companionship of strangers—the climate?" murmured Josephine, seeking in desperation for some argument against this terrible expatriation.

"On Madame Arnould's account, more than for any other reason, should I advise you to accept Monsieur Crawford's offer.

Her delicate health, her unfitness to struggle with a rough world, afford, to my mind, the best reasons why this offer should not be declined."

There was a pause; Josephine's hand which held the letter trembled, and her breath came fast.

"I know it; I know it," she stammered, at last. "I am ungrateful, and selfish, but—but O Monsieur Meunier, to leave this place and one's own dear country for a land of strangers. It is hard, hard!"

Her face fell into her hands, and she burst into a passionate flood of tears.

It was soon over. She was ashamed at thus giving way to her feelings, when there was such urgent necessity for self-command.

"Pardon me, monsieur," she said, drying her eyes; "I am weak and foolish; but I have been keeping down these tears three days, and they suddenly overpowered me. Ever since I read this letter, I have known there was nothing to be done but accept Mr. Crawford's offer, though I have tried to think otherwise. There! it is over now;

and I am ready to do all I can to induce my mother and my grandfather to look favourably on this most generous proposal."

Monsieur Meunier gazed with admiration on the bright, brave face the young girl turned on him through her tears. It was a handsome face at all times, but illumined with the spirit of devotion and courage that shone from it at that moment, Monsieur Meunier thought it the noblest face he had ever beheld.

CHAPTER II.

THE advice of Monsieur Meunier had settled the question. But it was a difficult matter for Josephine Arnould to know how to commence the work before her. She resolved to begin with her grandfather.

Monsieur Bertin had independent means—scanty means, it is true, for the old man had settled the bulk of his fortune on his daughters when he retired from business, and had lived with his second daughter, Augustine, ever since her marriage. But scanty as these means were, it was possible, as Josephine foresaw, that her grandfather would rather live on a very small income in his own country than enjoy a larger one in a foreign land. At his age this exile would be terrible. Josephine, who looked upon it

with such dread herself, felt half inclined to advise her grandfather to remain in France. But then he would be separated from her mother and herself. It was a sad prospect either way.

"Grandfather, may I come in?" asked Josephine, tapping at the door of the little work-room at the top of the house, soon after the notary's departure.

The door was opened, and Monsieur Martin, a grey-headed, but vigorous-looking old man with a high forehead and a pair of keen grey eyes, full of intelligence and humanity, bade his grand-daughter enter. He was working in his shirt-sleeves, and held a saw in one hand and a shelf from the linen closet in the other.

"Oh, eh, mademoiselle! Where hast thou been never to have found time to say 'good-day' to thy grandfather, before this? I've been listening for thy step on the stairs, this hour."

"Grandfather, I want a few words with you," said Josephine, when she had embraced the old man.

"What is it, my fawn?" asked the grandfather, noticing this serious air.

"It is not a very lively matter. But—but our lives have not been very lively of late, have they, grandfather? We must hope that God has better days in store for us ere long,—and—and we must be patient."

There were tears rising again in her eyes as she spoke.

"Some new trouble, Josephine? Well, well! God knows best!" The old man sighed and sat down on the tool chest, looking anxiously at his grand-daughter.

There was a pause. Josephine knew not how to begin as she regarded the grey-headed old man before her.

"Monsieur Meunier has been here—" she said, and stopped.

"Humph! I have been expecting him for days past;" replied Monsieur Bertin, raising his head. "How is it he makes no progress with your father's affairs?"

"It has not been altogether his fault, grandfather. We have been waiting until


the affairs were wound up before we spoke to you about them. I wanted to spare you trouble."

She could see her grandfather looked surprised and half angry. Old men are susceptible on these points, and do not always care to be spared trouble by their youngers.

"Thou thinkest thy grandfather only fit to mend broken locks and ill-fitting shelves, eh? He's getting too old for head-work, is he?" asked Monsieur Bertin, somewhat petulantly.

"I think my grandfather has done his share of head-work in his time, and should leave it to younger folks to do their share now," said Josephine, and taking her grandfather's hand in hers, she began the explanations before her.

Monsieur Bertin had known well enough that his son-in-law had died poor; but he had not known until now how little Monsieur Arnould's means had justified his late mode of life. It was the old story of the improvident man of genius, extravagant in his



tastes, sanguine as to the ultimate success of his labours, and incapable of exercising economy and self-denial. But then it was some extenuation of Gustave Arnould's conduct, that his life had been suddenly cut short in the midst of labours which he had always believed would ultimately place his family beyond the reach of poverty. When Monsieur Bertin learned the true state of matters, he held down his head in silence for some moments. Josephine felt a hot tear fall upon her hand.

"I never felt old till to-day," he murmured; "never repined after my lost strength before. But now, when your mother and you have no one but me to look to—a worn out old man—a tree ready to fall—why was I not taken and he left?"

"Hush! grandfather!" Josephine kissed the rugged hand she held in hers. "Ought we not to be very thankful that we have such a tender friend and protector as you to stand by us at this moment."

"Protector!" repeated the old man, bitterly; "fine protector—a man with

seventy years on his back, and an income of fifteen hundred francs. A handsome sum for three people to live on, certainly ! O Gustave, why am I not lying in thy place, at this moment ?" The old man bent his head and sobbed.

"Grandfather !" said Josephine, solemnly, when this burst of emotion had passed ; "Hast thou forgotten the words with which thou didst rebuke my impatient grief the day when my father was taken from us ? Thou hast read those words again, perhaps, this very morning in thy Bible here," and she took up from amongst the tools the book which was her grandfather's constant companion. "We are not left friendless, grandfather," she added. "He who made these promises has raised us up friends in our need," and then Josephine proceeded to tell her grandfather of the proposal she had received from this unknown uncle in England.

Monsieur Bertin heard it with unmixed surprise. His communications with his son-in-law had been so rare of late years that

he felt almost as if the offer came from a stranger.

For it was now nearly thirty years since that summer when an enterprising young Englishman, travelling on business in France, had presented himself one day at Monsieur Bertin's counting-house in Paris with letters of introduction.

Monsieur Bertin was at that time carrying on a large retail business in articles of bronze, and he resided with his family in apartments over his shop. The sequel of the introduction was that the young Englishman made the acquaintance of Monsieur Bertin's two daughters, with the elder of whom, Mademoiselle Camille, he quickly fell in love. After due time, he proposed, was ultimately accepted, and, six months later, Mr. Samuel Crawford scandalised all the spinsters of North Humberton by bringing home a French lady as his bride. But the happiness of the young married couple was of short duration. Ere two years were over, the young wife died in giving birth to her first child, leaving Mr. Crawford a

widower of seven and twenty with an infant daughter.

It was from this now almost unknown son-in-law that the offer of a home in England had come.

"Ah! if my poor Camille had been living, it would have been different," said the old man; "but they are all strangers, to me, yonder, or as good."

"But there is your other grand-daughter, my cousin Camille," said Josephine. "She, no doubt, is prepared to love you tenderly. Did she not write to you those pretty letters for the New Year you showed me once?"

"She has not written any these five years past," said the old man. "She is a fine young lady now-a-days; goes into society, I suppose, and would blush to see her grandfather mending locks, or gardening in his shirt sleeves. They say the English young ladies are very particular on these points."

"But we won't prejudge them, grandfather. Let me now paint my cousin Camille as I think we shall find her. She

will be blonde, of course, and have blue eyes, and brown hair in curls ; the English repose of manners, with a dash of French vivacity ; a round clear voice, and oh, such a sweet laugh ! I have made up my mind cousin Camille is charming, and that we shall all love her."

This pleasant portrait did not rouse the grandfather's enthusiasm.

"A foreign language," he muttered, "the bounty of a distant kinsman ;" and then, after a pause, he murmured to himself, "a grave amongst strangers."

Josephine's heart ached as she caught the last words.

"Grandfather," she said, after they had sat in silence for some moments ; "it is too great a sacrifice. Stay here in France. I do not—I dare not urge you to go. You have enough to live upon in our own dear land, and have no need to exile yourself. Mr. Crawford will provide for all our wants, and we shall be happier yonder in knowing you happy here."

The old man's hand trembled in hers as

she spoke. He looked at Josephine attentively for some moments, and then said slowly, "Thou thinkest I should be like a fish out of water, yonder? Ay, ay, old trees can't be transplanted like saplings, can they?"

"Thou dost not hesitate then, grandfather?" said Josephine, a little tremulously.

"No, I do not hesitate."

"My mother will feel—that is we—we had better, perhaps——" Josephine could not finish the sentence.

The old man looked with a curious expression at his grand-daughter.

"I do not hesitate," he continued, with a grave smile through his tears. "Trees die in a new soil, it is true, but then, trees haven't hearts, you see, and old men have, and affections and family ties, and that brings new considerations into the matter. If you go yonder, I go also, that is certain," continued the old man, slowly. "My other grandchild may be dear to me one day, but she can never be to me what you

are. You thought, silly child, I was hesitating just now! Ah, old men are egotists, but they are not like cats, who care more for familiar places than familiar friends. I should miss thee a little, thou seest, my pet."

As her grandfather uttered these words, with tender playfulness, Josephine flung her arms round his neck, and kissed him passionately.

"There, there! Thy grandfather is not to be got rid of so easily. The old tyrant means to rule abroad, as he has done at home," said the old man, gaily. "And tell me, if you please, mademoiselle, what you would do without the old fellow to run and fetch and carry for thee? These old limbs have some strength in them yet, thank God!" And then they fell to talking of the matter in its practical aspect.

Having gained over her grandfather to this strange proposal, Josephine felt more hopeful of obtaining her mother's consent. But she knew that there would be a hard struggle here.

Madame Arnould was a pretty, delicate woman, who had been petted by her husband, and treated as a spoiled child by her friends, all her life. She was the very reverse of her elder sister. Mademoiselle Camille Bertin had possessed energy and talent; had helped to keep her father's books, and been as valuable to him as any clerk, in the days of the Paris business. But Augustine Bertin had a horror of accounts, and could only play the ornamental part in her father's house, where she sat in a pretty *salon*, and played the harp and made wax flowers all day long. She was of a very affectionate nature, however, and loved her father and her husband devotedly. But it was quite certain that any strength of character her daughter possessed, was inherited from some other ancestor than her mother.

It was to this poor lady, so ill-fitted to struggle with adversity, that Josephine now turned her steps.

When Madame Arnould heard her daughter enter her bed-room, and ap-

proach the bed-side on tip-toe, to see if she still slept, she gave a little sigh, and murmured, peevishly,

"I thought you had quite forgotten me, Josephine. It must be nearly noon, I'm sure, and not a soul has been near me yet. There is nothing so bad," went on Madame Arnould, complainingly, "for delicate persons as lying in bed in a state of expectation. It quite upsets the nerves for the day. Oh, no, don't open the blind. My head won't bear the light."

Josephine thought it well to defer her explanation a while. But when at last she found an opportunity of disclosing Mr. Crawford's proposal, she was met by a flood of tears.

"Impossible, impossible!" moaned poor Madame Arnould, as she hid her face in the pillows. "I always knew we should be poor, but I did not think this trial would be added to the rest. No, no, we had better starve, beg, die, than accept the charity of purse-proud strangers."

"But we have no reason for supposing

that Monsieur Crawford is purse-proud, mother. On the contrary, his offer is generous, and most kindly intended, I feel sure."

"Ah, you do not know the man—so cold, so little sympathetic. How my dear sister, Camille, ever came to marry him, I could never understand. I was always too frightened of him myself, to let him approach me. And then his second wife! A cold, haughty Englishwoman, as I know from the letter she once wrote to me, asking me to procure her a new bonnet which was then in fashion. How could I live amongst such people? I should stifle under their roof."

"But we are not asked to live under their roof, mamma. Don't you see it is proposed that we should occupy apartments of our own? That seems to me very considerate. We could follow our own habits there, and should be at our ease."

"But that horrible North Humberton!" (Madame called it Nort Hoombairton).
"How could we live amongst its fogs and

smoke? And then no society for us—and no cookery that I could eat—and an insupportable dulness in the mode of life. Ah, my poor Camille did not long survive it all! I should follow her to her grave in six months.”

The cases were not quite analogous, as Josephine felt; she said nothing, but let her mother weep away her first distress.

“There would be one consolation. I should see thy tomb, my poor sister; and when I died I could be laid by thy side! The only place in all England I ever cared to see, is the cemetery where thou reposest.”

It was quite true that poor Madame Arnould did derive comfort from this reflection, sentimental as it might seem to some folks. But gradually, and with infinite tact, her daughter led her to reflect on some of the brighter aspects of this proposed change, and tried to make her recognise in it a providential provision for the future.

“I know, I know. We are beggars if we remain here, and I ought to be grateful to Monsieur Crawford; but—but I’m not so,

Josephine. How can I ever part from this place which poor Gustave loved so, and which he made so beautiful!" sobbed the poor lady. "To think of giving up my pretty *salon*, with its new green silk curtains and chairs which I embroidered with my own hands! And all my lovely china and cabinet-ware which Gustave had collected with such admirable taste. Even Parisian connoisseurs, men of the first distinction in Art, have said our drawing-room was perfect. But we must see all these things dispersed amongst strangers, and betake ourselves to England, I suppose, if you and your grandfather wish it. All places will be the same to me henceforth."

Thus querulously (not to say unreasonably) did the poor woman treat the proposal. Madame Arnould was never guided by reason so much as by feeling and impulse. But her impulses were generally good, and dictated by an affectionate heart. So that Josephine yet hoped her mother would take a less dismal view of things; as she did ere long.

"I confess I should like to see her," said

Madame, referring to her niece, of whose supposititious merits Josephine had been drawing a pleasing picture. "I wonder whether she has your poor aunt's eyes and little feet. My sister had the finest eyes I ever saw, and feet like Cinderella's. And yet she was not considered a beauty. I don't know how it was, but Camille did not make the best of her personal attractions—she was careless as to externals, and could never wear a shawl becomingly. But then nobody cared about that; she had the best heart in the world, and such good sense, and was twenty times more useful than I, and a thousand times better. Ah, my poor sister, I long to clasp thy daughter to my heart, and to see thee again in her!"

Gradually Madame Arnould began to entertain hopes that life might be supportable rather more than six months in England—that she might live perhaps as long as her sister had done—say two years. But she would not admit the possibility of being able to hold up any longer against the ravages of "that unwholesome climate."

"Let me see. Two years, you will then be three-and-twenty, my Josephine, and better able to do without a mother's protection," went on the poor lady, "and I shall at least leave you amongst friends, my child."

It was so evident that any protectorship that might exist between these two was on the other side, and Madame Arnould was so obviously the weaker and more dependent, that the remark would have sounded ludicrous to any third person. But Josephine only kissed her mother, and said she prayed it might be many years ere such necessity arose. By the time Madame Arnould had got dressed, and was seated in her easy chair by the open window, with a lace-trimmed pocket-handkerchief sprinkled with some fine essence in her hand, and a little orange-flower water by her side, to sip, she was able to look quite cheerfully at the future, and even began to arrange what dresses they must wear on the journey.

The good lady was thus engaged, when Madelon entered to announce that luncheon was ready in the *salle à manger*—a good

airy chamber, decorated with oak carvings of flowers and game and implements of the chase. Madame Arnould continued to discuss the subject when seated at table with her daughter and father, in spite of Josephine's efforts to lead the conversation in other directions. For as yet their old servant Madelon knew nothing of the proposed change, and Josephine had her own reasons for desiring to be the first to communicate it to her.

"Ah, my poor Madelon, thou wilt not have many more luncheons to cook for thy mistress!" said Madame Arnould plaintively, placing her own delicate white hand on her servant's brown one, as Madelon put a dish before her on the table.

"How's that?" asked Madelon, abruptly.
"Who then is going to cook them?"

"Strangers, my poor girl—people who will not study our tastes, as thou dost. Oh, my poor Madelon, what shall we do without thee, yonder?"

Madame Arnould looked up at her servant with eyes full of tears.

"Where, yonder?" asked the maid, more abruptly than before.

"In the country where we are going to live—in the land where my poor sister found a grave—in—in England, Madelon," sobbed Madame.

"England!" repeated Madelon, sharply; "what are you going there for?" and she crossed her arms over her apron—a high, old-fashioned bib apron—with an impatient jerk.

"To live with my brother-in-law, Madelon. He is very rich, and has offered me a home and an income if we will go yonder."

"Humph! If he's offered you that, I don't see we need weep much," said Madelon, speaking with an effort at gaiety, but looking round anxiously at the three uneasy faces before her. "I call that the right sort of brother-in-law, to make such an offer as that. What think you, Monsieur Bertin?"

"A generous offer, assuredly. Whether it is agreeable though to accept it, is another thing, you see, my girl."

"Without doubt. Nobody leaves their own country from choice, I suppose," said Madelon, with an air of decision. "But then there are scores of things in this life one doesn't do from choice. Better a foreign country, with bread to eat and money to pay one's way, than an empty stomach and the fear of debts in one's own land. And so we shall find, you'll see. I would rather like to travel and see a little of the world, for my part."

Madelon paused; but her three hearers remained silent. They knew well enough what the faithful creature meant, but had not the courage to tell her she must not include herself in these arrangements. Josephine began to speak, but her voice trembled so that she had to stop.

"Ah, mademoiselle, don't be downcast," continued Madelon, with the same cheery voice, but uneasy eyes. "Neither England nor the devil are as black as they're painted, I reckon. We shall find the way to make things go well yonder, take my word for it."

"My poor Madelon! Good, faithfu

creature, how thy words wound me!" sobbed Madame, in her handkerchief.

"You see, Madelon, it is not so easy to—to—" began Monsieur Bertin, and stopped, overcome.

There was a pause. Madelon's eyes wandered restlessly from one to the other, and a frown of impatience began to pucker her brows.

Then Josephine rose from her seat and laid her hand upon their old servant's arm, and, with a steady voice, but with tearful eyes, said,—

"Madelon, you love us all dearly, I know, and what I tell you will grieve you, but we are not able to take you yonder, much as we should wish it. It will be great pain to part with you, but we shall have to do so."

"Part with me! Ah, ah! The fine idea!" cried Madelon, raising her voice almost to a scream. "And what shall you do yonder without me, I should like to know? Who will make Madame her chicken broth and her omelettes? Who will cook Monsieur Bertin his cutlets and

artichokes? Who is to make your soups? Tell me that!" Madelon put the last question as a clincher, adding with an air of triumph, "Why, I have heard say that they never eat soups at all in England, and they cook their vegetables by tossing them into a pot of hot water, and eat their meat half raw. Tell me how you would like that, mademoiselle. They would kill your mother in a month, with their vile ways—that's what they would do!"

Madelon smacked her hand emphatically on the breast-bone of her stays, and looked round indignantly at the persons capable of such a base proposal.

"No, mademoiselle," she continued, speaking very fast, and with the same excited air, "if there's any going to England, you'll have to take me, for I should think myself a brute and a traitress to let your mother go without me, the poor lamb!" and Madelon looked at her mistress as compassionately as if she had been an unweaned baby about to be torn from her nurse.

"But, Madelon, you forget that we cannot

do as we like," said Josephine, secretly delighted with this fidelity, but not daring to show how she approved it. "We must accept Mr. Crawford's proposal, as he makes it. He offers to find a home for us, but I fear he would think it unreasonable if we proposed adding another person to our party. It might seem to him an extravagance unsuited to our circumstances, or like taking advantage of —"

"Ah!" interrupted Madelon, "I see what you are thinking of. It's the money part of the business, is it?"

"That amongst other things, Madelon. We are too poor to —"

A hard sob burst from Madelon's lips, and holding her face in her apron, she sank upon a chair, and rocked herself to and fro.

"Oh, mademoiselle, to think that you should say it! To think you don't know me better!"

"Madelon! That! You don't understand me."

"To talk about money and wages to a poor servant who has served you faithfully

these twenty years ! . As though she hadn't a heart, but only cared to fill her pocket with crown-pieces, and get fat at her master's expense. Oh, what an opinion you must have of me ! ”

“ A most high opinion, my good Madelon,” said Josephine, taking her hand. “ But think one moment of the great sacrifices you would be making. We know your devotion, but we must not let you——”

“ Sacrifices ! Bah ! ” interrupted Madelon, brusquely. “ I tell you what, mademoiselle, my mind is made up.” She dropped her apron and rose from her seat, with a resolute almost a fierce air. “ I mean to go yonder with you, and so it's no use having more discussion. When your dear father lay ill, he said to me one night, when almost too weak to speak, pointing to madame who was dozing in her chair, ‘ You will not leave her when I'm gone, Madelon ? ’ and I took my dear master's hand in mine and promised I would never leave her, and I shan't. There ! That's how the matter stands.”

Madelon stopped a moment, for her throat

was husky. Before any one had time to speak, she resumed,—

“Madelmoiselle, you will please to add a little word to your letter to Monsieur—Monsieur——”

“Crawford,” said Madame Arnould, hysterically, from behind her pocket-handkerchief, supplying the name Madelon sought.

“Bah, an impossible name! You will please to add a word to tell him that an old servant desires to accompany you to England. You will say that she is forty-five years of age next St. John’s Day, has a stout pair of arms, a good courage, and is not frightened of work. You will tell him that except her board and lodging she will want nothing, having made economies since she has been in your father’s service, and got a good stock of clothes and linen by her. And you will add that she is so careful in her kitchen that she undertakes to save him two hundred francs a-year by her own thrift. There, write that, my jewel, and let’s hear no more of my leaving you.”

Whereupon, Madelon took up an empty


dish and hastened out of the room, leaving all three of her auditors in tears.

“I will write,” said Josephine, looking at her mother and grandfather with glowing cheeks. “I will write this very night, and repeat her own words, brave, faithful soul!”

And the letter was written.

CHAPTER III.

ON the outskirts of North Humberton, and beyond the limits of the great smoke-cloud that overhung that busy seat of industry, stood the residence of Mr. Samuel Crawford, known popularly in the locality by the name of Ruin Hall. A gloomy title, suggestive of crumbling walls, a cold hearthstone, and a bankrupt master : but a clear misnomer in the present case. Ruin Hall was a substantial mansion, combining all the latest improvements in domestic architecture. There were mechanical lifts to convey the dinner from the kitchen to the dining-room ; a heating apparatus that deprived winter of its terrors ; scientific ventilation ; with speaking tubes, and hot and cold water on every floor. But the ill-sounding name was hard to get rid of, as Mrs. Samuel Crawford



found, for people would remember that its original possessor ruined himself by building it, and then went out of his mind, and shut himself up in the back-kitchen for several weeks, where he was found dead by the tax-gatherer.

Mr. Crawford had lately (at his wife's instigation) changed the name of his residence to the more euphonious one of Holly Hall, and Mrs. Crawford's note-paper was stamped with that address. But as Mr. C. sensibly observed, "Call it Holly or call it Ruin, you couldn't make it any other than a lucky purchase, and a right good house that suited him to a T."

Driving home from North Humberton in his dog-cart this evening, Mr. Crawford felt a pleasant sense of satisfaction as he turned into his lodge gates and beheld his handsome house, with its conservatories and pineries, shining through the yellow autumn leaves. The worthy iron-founder alighted from his dog-cart with that good-humoured expression of face which the contemplation of one's own property is calculated to produce; but Mr.

Crawford's face underwent a change as soon as he had got within doors.

He had gone in by a side entrance near the footman's pantry, and the first thing that met his eye was an epergne filled with fruit and flowers, standing amidst an array of glass and china. Why should the sight of an epergne, and so elegant a one, cause a cloud to overshadow a man's face?

Alas! it recalled a dinner-party for that evening which Mr. Crawford had quite forgotten until that moment. He had been anticipating a snug dinner with his own family, with an easy chair and slippers afterwards, and a magazine or a newspaper to doze over. But instead of that, the sight of that detestable piece of electro-plate recalled to him that there was nothing for him to-night but a dress-coat, tight boots, with six courses, wearisome talk, and yawns forbidden. What made it more annoying, Mr. Crawford particularly wanted to discuss with his wife and daughters this evening a certain family matter he had in his mind. He entered his dressing-room in as nearly a bad

humour as a man of such excellent temper and self-control ever approached.

"Is that you, my dear?" said a voice from the adjoining room, where Mrs. Crawford was putting the last touches to her toilette. "You have barely ten minutes to dress."

"Five will be enough for me," replied Mr. Crawford, somewhat curtly.

Mrs. Crawford remarked the curtness, and, not to be daunted by it, said,

"I'm afraid you forgot to call at the fish-monger's: they never sent the salmon. If cook hadn't had the soles to fall back upon, I don't know what we should have done."

"Dined off the dozen other dishes, I suppose," was the unamiably reply.

"And no one would have been more vexed than yourself to see your table look ridiculous," returned the wife, which was true, for Mr. Crawford was hospitable to excess.

At this point, Mrs. Crawford opened the door and appeared before her husband in all the splendour of a black velvet dress and a

lace cap with marabout feathers. A not unbecoming costume, and producing by no means an ill effect, for Mrs. Crawford was what is called "a genteel-looking" woman, and but for a too pervading lightness of tone in complexion and hair, and a deficiency of eye-brows, would have looked very well yet by candlelight.

"I think you had better take Mrs. Vincent in to dinner, my dear, and ask Mr. Hallows to take me," said the lady of the house.

"Very well," replied the husband, drawing off his boots. "Stay a minute, I have got a letter from Fontainebleau to-day. Perhaps you would like to see it."

A slight shade passed over Mrs. Crawford's fair brows.

"I hope the matter is settled at last, and to the satisfaction of all parties," she remarked. "It won't be your fault if it isn't."


"I think it is settled quite satisfactorily, myself; but you will see what they say," and Mr. Crawford handed a letter to his wife.

Now Mr. Crawford had received two letters from Fontainebleau to-day, and it was a little malicious of him to give to his wife the one written by Madame Arnould, which was in French, instead of her daughter's, which was in excellent English ; but, then, the good man was rather put out, and besides, Mrs. Crawford always claimed considerable acquaintance with the French language, though her husband strongly suspected she would find the real article rather different to the Manchester French Mrs. C. had been taught in her youth.

Letter in hand, Mrs. Crawford descended to her drawing-room, and after a glance at the marabout feathers in one of the mirrors, seated herself on the couch, and taking up her eye-glass, set herself to the perusal of the letter. It was all plain sailing as far as the address and the first words went, but from that point the writer's style seemed to Mrs. Crawford not quite so clear as it might have been. The French tongue, as spoken at Fontainebleau, had evidently not the smoothness and perspicuity that it used to

have at Manchester. To say that Mrs. Crawford understood one third of Madame Arnould's letter would be a liberal allowance, yet it is a curious fact, that when she had got to the end, Mrs. Crawford folded it up with a pleasant conviction that she had read it and understood its meaning—quite as well, that is, as one can be expected to understand the meaning of foreigners. She sat tapping her fingers meditatively with the letter, thinking, not of its contents, but of the excellent wear she had found in that velvet dress, which really looked fresh as ever, when the door opened, and those unreasonably early arrivers the Hewletts entered—positively before Mr. Crawford or the girls were down!

An interval of small talk, and then the daughters of the house descended. Camilla Crawford, in amber silk, sailed in with graceful air, and gave her gloved hand to the Hewletts with a charming smile. Alice, her half-sister, entered less gracefully, but kissed old Mrs. Hewlett on the cheek, and sat down by her side to talk to her about



her neuralgia and her schools, for Mrs. Hewlett was the wife of the clergyman of the parish.

"Camilla, my love," whispered Mrs. Crawford to the elder daughter, on the first opportunity, "why did you let Alice put on that crumpled muslin? The poor child looks a perfect fright."

"*Ma foi*, Alice is her own mistress in such matters, mamma," said Camilla, with a shrug of the shoulders, which she intended to be French. "I did not see her till she was dressed."

"Ah, if she had but a particle of your taste, my dear!" sighed the step-mother. "You look regal in your amber and lace, Camilla, you do, indeed."

"*Merci, maman, un joli compliment*, but I think you have told me before I look well in amber."

"What is that about compliments?" asked old Mr. Hewlett, who was very deaf and consequently a great talker. "They say the art of paying them died away with Lord Chesterfield."

"I was telling Camilla that she is the favourite with our gardener, who always gives her the best bouquets, and she says it is a pretty compliment," said Mrs. Crawford with frightful *aplomb*. "Are not those late roses superb, Mr. Hewlett?"

Mrs. Crawford had not the least idea that she had just told a downright lie, be it said.

"Is Mathew coming, papa?" asked Camilla aside, of her father, when that gentleman entered the room; for the elder Miss Crawford sat away from the group near the fire, not caring to waste her conversational powers on the Hewletts.

"I suppose so. Is he, my dear?" asked Mr. Crawford, turning to his wife.


"Of course he is," said Mrs. Crawford, adding in a lower tone, "You know the Vincents are coming."

Mr. Crawford looked for a moment as though he did not quite see the connection of ideas, but gave a short "Ah, yes!" afterwards, with a queer little smile.

"Mathew" was Mr. Crawford's nephew; the second partner in the firm of Crawford Brothers, the well known Engineers and Machine-makers of North Humberton, whose big furnaces furnished a large quota daily to the smoke-cloud that overhung the town. Mr. Mathew Crawford was thirty years of age and unmarried. His parents died when he was a boy, and he had been brought up in his uncle's home. For the last two years he had been living in apartments in North Humberton, in order to be nearer the Foundry and his workpeople he said, but in order also to escape the peculiar form of petticoat government which existed in his uncle's house, it was believed.

And now other visitors were announced, and amongst them the Vincents—the chief guests of the evening, for whom indeed the dinner party had been specially provided, though Mr. Crawford in his aggravating indifferent way seemed quite to have forgotten it.

The Vincents were two. A mamma in widow's weeds, and a daughter in that transi-



tionary stage of grief which admits of soft-grey and dove-colour tints. Miss Vincent looked a very healthy and a handsome young lady; she had dark hair, rosy cheeks, fine eyes, and was tall and well made. Miss Vincent had just come of age and was the only daughter of the late Peter Vincent, Esquire, a proprietor of large mines, who had left Mr. Crawford one of the executors under a will which bequeathed a very fine fortune to his daughter and a very handsome annuity to his wife. This was the first appearance in society of Mrs. Vincent and her daughter since they had gone into mourning.

And now Miss Camilla Crawford shewed that she had not reserved herself up to this point without due forethought and discrimination. She floated across the room in her amber robes, and embracing Miss Vincent affectionately, assured her she was "charmed to see her dear Lilian out once more."

"Quite as glad to come, I can tell you," said Miss Vincent, in a full, decided voice. "How well you are looking, Cammy."

Now that was certainly a disagreeable point about the heiress, her queer persistence in calling people by those stupid school nicknames. It was all very well, Camilla felt, to call one another "Cammy" and "Lilly" at Mrs. Flimmington's, but out in society it was quite another thing. But Camilla, of course, knew better than to shew any annoyance.

"I can return the compliment, dear," she replied with a sweet smile. "*Vous êtes mise à ravir.*"

The two young ladies sat down to talk, whilst Mrs. Crawford took charge of Mrs. Vincent—a stout lady, all crape and widow's cap, who seemed to make it a point of duty on this her first appearance in society, not to speak in a voice above a whisper, and to draw her breath with difficulty when she did speak.

Everybody had now come but Mr. Mathew Crawford, and the hostess was looking impatiently at the clock on the mantelpiece, when a servant entered and delivered a note to Miss Alice, who opened it and read,—

"DEAR ALLY,

"I had quite forgotten that to-night is the quarterly meeting of our Workmen's Provident Association, of which, as you know, I am secretary. Will you make my peace with my aunt? It is annoying to have a vacant seat at table, but what can I do?

"Yours affectionately,

"MATHEW CRAWFORD."

Alice felt very uneasy at having to act as her cousin's apologist. She knew how vexed Mrs. Crawford would be, for Alice was a shrewd little person, and strongly suspected that the dinner-party to the Vincents had been devised with the intention of bringing together her cousin Mathew and the heiress; and Miss Alice was right, as her mamma's first words proved.


"And who, pray, is to take Miss Vincent in to dinner?" asked Mrs. Crawford, in an angry aside. "It is just like Mathew; he has no consideration in these matters."

Mrs. Crawford was so put out that she

turned away from her daughter without listening to a word she had to say about the Provident Association.

Of course it was very provoking to a hostess who piqued herself on her successful dinner parties, the more so that the present one had been entirely devised in the interest of the ungrateful young man who absented himself thus awkwardly. The honour reserved for him fell to the lot of a chattering young lawyer, whom Miss Vincent snubbed unmercifully, for, to tell the truth, the heiress herself was vexed at the non-appearance of Mr. Mathew Crawford. She "would rather quarrel with him," she said, "than agree with a goose who was trying to do the agreeable."

Under these adverse circumstances, Mrs. Crawford's dinner party proved a slow and tedious affair. The heiress was seized with an attack of yawns as soon as the ladies retired to the drawing-room, from which even her friend "Cammy" could not rouse her; while Mr. Crawford was so outrageously forgetful of his duties, and so worn



out with the day's business in North Humberton, that he positively fell asleep in a corner ten minutes after he entered the drawing-room.

"And everything might have passed off so well, if Mathew had only had the civility to keep his engagement," said Mrs. Crawford, acrimoniously, when her guests had gone, and she sat reviewing the evening, with her velvet robe tucked up to warm her feet (small feet of which Mrs. Crawford was vain,) on the fender-stool. "I hope, Mr. Crawford, you will tell him to-morrow how thoroughly he spoiled the evening."

"I am afraid it might make him conceited, my dear," said Mr. Crawford, with a humorous twinkle of his grey eyes; and then, with an air of wakefulness that was nothing less than an insult to the departed guests, he asked,—

"Well, and what did you think of my sister-in-law's letter?"

Mrs. Crawford had forgotten all about it; but she replied vaguely,—

"Madame Arnould writes very prettily,

I think. What a charm there is in the French style, isn't there?"

"Oh, have you heard again from Fontainebleau, papa? Do tell us what they say?"

As she spoke Alice seated herself on the footstool at her father's feet, and began eagerly to read Josephine's letter.

"They are coming then, are they?" asked Camilla, who sat turning over the leaves of a photographic album at a side-table.

"Yes, as soon as their arrangements yonder will let them," said her father.

"All of them?" asked Camilla.


"Of course. You didn't expect they would leave your grandfather, Monsieur Bertin, behind?"

"How strange it sounds!"

"What?"

"Grandfather! A person I have never seen. I can't realise that relationship. I can't form any idea of Monsieur Bertin."

"There is no occasion for you to do so, as you will see him in a few days," said Mr. Crawford. He did not quite like the way in which his daughter spoke.



"Poor Josephine! How much she will feel leaving her country," said Alice, as she handed the letter to her sister, and she sat looking thoughtfully at the fire.

"Yes, it must be a great trial for them," said Mrs. Crawford, when she also had read Josephine's letter, and had arrived at a clearer comprehension of matters. "France is such a fine country, and the language so elegant, to say nothing of manners. I am afraid we shall all seem dreadfully backward in that respect, with our English bluntness."

"I don't see that at all, mamma," said Alice. "Good manners are the same all over the world, the result of good feeling, I suppose; and we English are not wanting in that, I hope?"

"We must mind our *p's* and *q's* at all events," said Mrs. Crawford; "I picture Camilla's cousin as a model of grace and Parisian elegance. Is she older than you, Camilla?"

"I am sure I don't know," was the reply. Camilla was turning over the album again.

Age was a subject on which she was growing reticent.

"Oh no! she must be younger. She cannot be more than two or three and twenty," said Alice. "Is not that her age, papa?"

"About that, I believe," said Mr. Crawford; and, turning to his elder daughter, he continued, "your mother died two years before Madame Arnould was married. Your cousin Josephine is, I think, about four years younger than yourself."

"And what arrangements have you made for them, papa? Have you taken rooms, as you talked of doing?" asked Camilla, rousing herself to at least an air of interest in these details concerning her relatives.

"Yes, I have secured the upper part of Mrs. Boss's house, with the use of a kitchen. They are going to bring their own servant with them."

"Indeed! Won't that be highly inconvenient? I know foreign servants never agree with ours," said Mrs. Crawford.

"It is their wish to bring her, and I don't

like to thwart them," said Mr. Crawford, "as she is an old servant. Probably she won't settle, but that's not our affair."

"Who is Mrs. Boss, papa? I seem to know the name," said Alice.

"She is the wife of a retired seaman who has made a little money by coals, and goes by the name of Captain Boss; and a very clean woman and good housewife is Mrs. Boss."

Mrs. Crawford would have liked to ask her husband what rent he had undertaken to pay, and to say a word or two on the sort of housekeeping she thought would be becoming for people situated as the Arnoulds were; but there were often occasions in life when Mrs. Crawford did not say the thing she wished, but something quite different indeed. And so now, after a little further conversation, carried on between her husband and Alice, for Camilla had relapsed again into silence and the contemplation of her photographs, Mrs. Crawford put in, quite cheerfully,—

"Well, I am really very glad it is all so

pleasantly settled. I am sure they ought to be very grateful to you, my dear, and I have no doubt they will be, and will do all they can to repay you. And as for the girls, it will be an advantage in every way to them, especially to you, Alice, who speak French shockingly. And I can quite understand poor Camilla's feelings, for really it is a very unusual and painful position to be placed in, to have to receive a whole family of relatives whom you have never seen. But you know, dear, that feeling will wear off," continued Mrs. Crawford, turning to her step-daughter, who looked anything but grateful for this sympathy. "And I have no doubt we shall all be the best friends imaginable in a very short time."

With which amiable little speech, uttered quite gaily, as though everybody else's spirits were much damped by the prospect before them, and she was doing her best to cheer them, Mrs. Crawford rang for the bed-room candles, and the family retired to their rooms.


"What a trial it will be for them all!"

pondered Alice. "I wish I could speak French better. I will set to work again with my conversation book to-morrow."

"I suppose I ought to write to them," reflected Camilla, before the glass in her dressing-room. "It will look strange, perhaps, if I don't. I wonder whether I could ask them to bring over one of the new head-dresses Lilian Vincent was talking of to-night."

CHAPTER IV.

TURNING out of the main streets of North Humberton, and following the sinuous course of any of the lanes that studded the poor and crowded district, known by the name of Monkfields, in the parish of St. Jude, you were pretty sure to come upon a large block of smoke-blackened buildings, whence there issued an incessant hammering and clanking of metal, accompanied with the strident creak of cranes, and the roaring of furnace fires. This building, which only differed from several other similar buildings in North Humberton in being bigger, blacker, and noisier, was known in the locality as "Crawfords' Works," and Crawfords' workmen (some six hundred in number) dwelt in the narrow lanes and



alleys that lay within the shadow of the tallest chimney shaft.

Not a cheerful nor a sightly place was Messrs. Crawfords' yard, with its disabled engines, and worn-out boilers, and piles of rusty iron, and heaps of cinders and refuse. It was a region of harsh sounds, and black, smoke-begrimed faces, where the skies above rained soot, and the earth produced nothing but rust. There had been moments when Mathew Crawford, the junior partner in the firm, had felt a profound disgust for its gloomy precincts. But that was in the earlier part of his career, ere he had discovered the higher side of the life of a man of business, and the important duties and interests that attached to his position.

To-night, as he closes his office books, Mr. Mathew Crawford is congratulating himself that business affords him such an excellent excuse for the refusal of invitations that he does not care to accept. How wearied he would have been, for instance, had he been obliged to dance attendance

on the young ladies assembled at Mrs. Vincent's "garden-party" this afternoon. Better tied to his desk than trifling with bows and arrows, or talking nonsense over croquet, with simpering misses in white muslins.

Not that Miss Vincent was a "simpering miss," reflected Mr. Crawford. "Her blunt, not to say loud, manners were after all preferable to the affectations of nine girls out of ten. The heiress was a sensible and handsome young woman, and, even without her fortune, was the sort of girl"—"to make a man a good wife," was Mathew Crawford about to add? He stopped his meditations, and closing his ledger suddenly, got up and walked about the room.

"Suppose, after all, there was reason in what his uncle had been observing to him that very afternoon. Suppose it was really time he began to think about marrying. He was thirty last birthday, and, as far as worldly prospects went, in a position to take a wife, if ever a man was. But for the manœuvring, match-making tendencies of his

aunt he might have been married ere this. Perhaps he was over difficult to please, as they said—held some exaggerated ideal of the sex, incapable of realisation. However that might be, he had of late begun to think he never should know any other love for woman than that quite brotherly sentiment he entertained for his cousin Alice. Taking young women as he had found them (always excepting his old favourite, Alice), he thought Miss Vincent possessed as many sterling qualities, and as few faults, as most of her sex. Perhaps if the advantages of fortune had not been so obvious, and the wishes of his friends so plainly declared, he might have——”

Again his meditations were cut short—this time by the entrance of a foreman with a bunch of keys, which he deposited on his master’s desk.

“Is it so late, Russell?” said Mr. Crawford, pausing in his walk.

“Bell’s rung ten minutes ago, sir. Hands are all out.”

The speaker was a good-looking man in a



linen jacket and corduroys, stained with oil and coal-dust. He did not retire again, but stood hesitatingly, as though he had something to say.

"Well, sir, I've done it at last," he remarked, with an embarrassed laugh. "Got myself promised, sir."

"Promised?" repeated the other. "How promised?"

"To be married. Hannah Crofton it is, sir—needlewoman, St. Swithin's Lane. The ladies up at the Hall knows her; I reckon."

"Well, I believe you have chosen a good girl, Russell. I wish you joy."

Mr. Crawford held out his hand to the man. They stood on a somewhat different footing to masters and workmen in general. Mathew Crawford had saved James Russell's life, on a skating expedition, when they were boys—a circumstance which the latter certainly was not inclined to forget.

"You're right, sir," said he, his face brightening under the coal-dust and dirt that covered it; "she is a good lass, and

she'll make a good wife, I guess. I hope you'll meet with the like of her yourself, one day. It's time you was a thinking of it yourself, Mr. Mathew," and, with a laugh, the man bade his employer good night and vanished.

It was not unnatural that Mr. Crawford's thoughts should flow back into their old channel as he pursued his way home to his lodgings in Tyne Street. Sitting over his bachelor tea and recalling Russell's words, he could not but picture the pleasant fire-side that would await the man's return home from work a few weeks hence.

"Undoubtedly it was the right and natural state of things," (thus ran his thoughts,)—"that hearth graced by a woman's presence—that life of common joys and sorrows. But had he yet met the woman he should care to place by his own fire-side?—the life-companion with whom he could journey on through rough and smooth till the last goal was reached?"

An hour later, Mr. Crawford was on his way to Scarsdene—as the residence of the Vincents was styled—for though he had

escaped the croquet, he could not absent himself from the "little music" that was to follow.

Scarsdene was a handsome mansion that crowned one of the hills overlooking North Humberton. With its ample gardens and several acres of park attached, it was an imposing-looking place. Its late master had once entertained Royalty there (to luncheon) on the occasion of the opening of the North Humberton new Docks; and there was an impression in the locality that Scarsdene had borne comparison with Buckingham Palace in the Royal mind and had not suffered in consequence.

Lights were streaming from all the lower windows as Mr. Crawford approached, and visitors were sauntering about amongst the flowering plants that lined the colonnade in front. A fine roulade that reached Mr. Crawford's ear as he drew near proved that "the little music" had begun. Camilla was executing her latest operatic novelty. He drew back behind one of the pillars of the colonnade to await the finale, ere he con-

signed himself to the footmen standing in the hall.


"How d'ye do?" cried a clear, round voice, close at hand. "Thought you were going to desert us altogether," and Miss Lilian Vincent stepped out from the nearest window and held out her hand.

Mr. Crawford murmured some excuses about his "unavoidable absence."

"Oh, of course—business engagements. The old story! Why can't men be frank, and own they prefer reading their newspaper in their own offices, to dawdling about after ladies on damp grass? If there's one thing I hate, it is your polite falsehoods."

"But a man can't own to reading newspapers when he's been hard at work all day. It is too bad to attack one's character as a man of business as well as one's gallantry."

"Well, I'll admit you may have written a few letters yonder—made out a few invoices, or whatever you call them. But gallantry, indeed! Don't try to set up a character for gallantry thus late in the day. I shouldn't



enjoy quarrelling with you half so well, Mr. Crawford, if you were not the most uncivil and unflattering man in my acquaintance. Won't you come in?"

The song being ended, they entered through the drawing-room window, and were in the midst of the guests.

"Can you see the difference between this and 'an evening party'?" said Miss Vincent, in a low tone, looking round the well filled room. "Polite falsehoods again. We are supposed not to be equal for large assemblies on this account," pointing to her half-mourning dress, "but we can manage to entertain forty or fifty people, if we call it a 'little music,' and begin with croquet. By Christmas I suppose we shall be able to give a ball without offence, if we go through the intermediate stages correctly. Thank you, Camilla, you sang it charmingly."

The elder Miss Crawford passed at that moment, and stopped to speak to her cousin.

"I wonder you dare to show yourself, Mathew," said she. "But I know that if anything could draw you away from those

horrid Works, it would be an invitation to Scarsdene."

This was said with an arch glance at Miss Vincent. But Mathew Crawford was the last man to bandy compliments or make pretty speeches.

"I don't think I should have got away at all but for my clerk getting his books made up earlier than usual," he replied, with strict veracity.

Miss Vincent heard the speech and moved away without comment.


"At all events your absence would have been noticed here," whispered Camilla. "I know some one who has been out half-a-dozen times to look for you."

Mathew Crawford reddened, and said with an air of vexation,—

"What a pity it is, Camilla, you let your imagination run away with you as you do. Where is Mrs. Vincent?"

"Yonder, in the far drawing-room, with the married folks." And Mathew Crawford went off to pay his respects to her.

It was some time before he came across



Miss Vincent again. She was sitting alone with Alice on a couch near the open windows when next he encountered her.

"What a delightful story this is, Mr. Crawford, about these new foreign relatives who are coming to live amongst you. From Alice's account, they must be charming people!"

"Frenchwomen are always charming, you know, as correspondents; and Alice only knows them through their letters, as yet," said Mathew.

"Mademoiselle Arnould will be quite as nice as her letters, I feel sure," said Alice, warmly.

"She will be a very graceful person, I have no doubt; but she will not be quite what you picture her, I think," said Mr. Crawford.

"Why so?" asked Alice, surprised at the speech and its tone.

"Because, with amiable enthusiasm, you imagine her to be something very like perfection, and a Frenchwoman's education generally produces something far from

perfect. Mademoiselle Arnould will have been brought up very differently to you and Camilla, you must remember."

Alice began to wonder whether her mamma's training was really the perfection of wisdom, and whether the boarding-school, where she and her sister had been educated, was very superior to anything of the kind in France?

"At all events it is our duty not to pre-judge her, Mathew," she made reply.

"I should be very sorry to do that. I merely want to warn you against letting yourself be carried away by the fascinations of Mademoiselle Arnould."

"Then, she will be fascinating, you allow," laughed Miss Vincent. "Mark my words, Alice, if he is not the first to succumb to the charmer. These cold, reasonable men are always dreadfully susceptible, you know."

But Mathew Crawford gravely replied that a Frenchwoman's fascinations would have small charm for him. "He liked simplicity and frankness better than the finest tact and

most finished grace. Though by no means an admirer of masculine women," he remarked, "he preferred a female fox-hunter to a woman who could only handle a fan or an opera-glass, and whose talk was all of fashions."

Was the phrase "female fox-hunter" intended as an allusion to Miss Vincent's tastes? She was accused of masculine propensities, and was known to be the best horse-woman in the neighbourhood. There were even folks who said that she leaped five-barred-gates, practised pistol-shooting in private, and went about with a bull-dog at her heels. But then there were other folks (her late father's miners, for instance,) who were loud in her praises, and extolled her generosity and kindness of heart. Of some of these qualities she had given proof that day. She had been engaged with an architect on a scheme for building new cottages for the work-people on the property. The conversation happened soon to turn upon this subject, and Mathew was pleased with the warm interest Miss Vincent displayed in the

condition of her work-people, and her practical way of looking at matters.

“She has more intelligence than I gave her credit for,” he reflected, that night, on his way home to Tyne Street; “and, unless I am mistaken, she has a good heart as well as a sound head.”

If Mrs. Crawford could have heard the speech, she would almost have forgiven her nephew for the long list of misdeeds she had stored up against him.

CHAPTER V.


THE North Humberton Railway Station was never at any period a cheerful or a picturesque spot; but it certainly looked at its worst on a wet night in autumn, when the rain had been falling all day in the streets outside, and the long shed-like building was filled with damp, smoky vapours. On such a night, when the suspended traffic of the day had left its traces in the muddy footmarks on the platform, in the empty sandwich papers and crumpled newspapers that strewed the waiting-rooms, and in the general accumulation of dirt and disorder that the tide of human beings which had flowed through the building since morning had left behind them—on such a night, the North Humberton railway-station was capable of inspiring a sense of profound

depression. At such seasons the young man at the bookstall would pack up his papers and magazines half-an-hour earlier than usual, and turn a deaf ear to the blandest customer who sought a penny time-table in such weather. The porters would wrangle over the fire in their own room, where one of them kept a furtive flute, on which he practised in wet weather; and the clerk in the booking-office would yawn until he threatened to dislocate his jaw. About this hour half the gaslights of the establishment were turned off, for there was only "the half-past eight down" to come in; and so the pervading gloominess of things was increased by the melancholy twilight that reigned around.

The ringing of the bell that signalled the "half-past eight down's" approach always awoke a temporary life in the station. For a few minutes there was a hurrying to and fro of passengers, an awakening of activity amongst the porters, a suspension of yawns in the booking-office, and a rattling of cab-wheels in the yard outside. But the train

moved on again, and then the gloom returned with increased intensity. By the time the last cab had got under weigh, the platform was generally given over to solitude and two feeble lamps, until the mail arrived at two in the morning.

But to-night the tide which has just swept through the North Humberton station has left behind it a group of travellers who do not clear off with the rest. The travellers in question present a rather stranded, shipwrecked appearance, from the way in which they are huddling together, and the uneasy looks they are casting around them. They have attracted considerable attention ever since they stepped out of the train, from the fact that one of them wears a high white cap and gold ear-rings, but has no bonnet on her head. She is an honest-faced woman, who looks about her in a dauntless way, as though she were not to be put out of countenance by all the foreigners under the sun; for it is clear that everybody about her is a foreigner in her eyes. A consultation of some gravity is evidently going on amongst



the group. An elderly man with grey hair is talking very quickly, and a lady in deep mourning, with a fluttering pocket-handkerchief, seems greatly agitated, and verging on hysterics. But a younger lady takes her hand and tries to console her. Whispering a word in her grandfather's ear, the younger lady takes his arm, and they approach one of the officials to put some question to him.

Now, the elderly gentleman is so ignorant of our usages, and so accustomed to show politeness to others, irrespective of their rank, that whilst his grand-daughter addresses the man in very fair English, he takes off his hat to him, and bows politely. This act so disconcerts the official (who immediately concludes the elderly gentleman has some design upon his purse), that he assumes a forbidding air, and says,—

“Don't understand, ma'am,” before the young lady has had time to explain herself.

“You don't know the name, then?” says the young lady, rather discouraged.

The official shakes his head.

“I thought Mr. Crawford” (the young

lady pronounces it "Croavord") "was well known, however," she persists.

"Nobody of that name here," replies the man, refusing to make any allowance for differences of pronunciation.

"And yet they promised to send to meet us," said the young lady, looking uneasily at her grandfather. "It is very strange."

"If your friends ain't here, you can wait awhile yonder," said the official, pointing to the second-class waiting-room; "but they shut up at ten."

The young lady signified her intention of waiting, and after consultation with her grandfather, adjourned with her friends to the room indicated.

"Rum-looking party you've got there, Thompson," says the bookstall-keeper to the official. "Parly-voos, eh?"

The official nodded his head, surlily, and, looking at Madelon's retreating figure with an expression of disgust, added,—

"Talk of head-dresses, that woman ain't respectable, going about like that. If that's French fashions, they'd better keep 'em at

home, say I," and he turned on his heel as though the spectacle were more than his outraged feelings could bear.

The second-class waiting-room did not improve the spirits of the foreign travellers. Even natives had been known to grow depressed, and flag under the influence of that frowsy apartment. Madame Arnould shuddered as she looked round her, and subsided into a hard-bottomed seat and tears. "She always knew there would be some mistake. She was afraid they ought to have got out at the last station but one. She told them she had seen North-something written up. It was too late to do anything now. She supposed they must stay there all night," &c. Monsieur Bertin walked up and down the room with impatient strides. Josephine tried to calm her mother; and Madelon stood on guard at the door, and looked defiantly at the porters who were criticising her at a distance.

It was really becoming very perplexing. Half an hour stole away, and no friends appeared in sight. Josephine got out Mr.

Crawford's last letter. Yes, they were expected that evening, and Mr. Crawford promised to send his carriage to meet the train, and convey them to their lodgings. "If he had not had an engagement, he would have been there to meet them himself," he wrote.

Josephine tried to raise the spirits of the party; but it was of no use. Everybody felt it to be a bad beginning.

"We must not expect much consideration, that is evident," said madame, shaking her head. "We must get used to playing the part of dependents."

"They might have managed matters better, I think," muttered Monsieur Bertin.

Madelon scowled at the porters, and looked quite ready to resist any attack from that quarter.

Josephine tried to interest herself in the advertisements round the walls (which had all the novelty of a new language) and read a great deal about Insurance Companies, Sheffield Cutlery, and Burton Ales, within the next twenty minutes. She was just coming to a conclusion that Brown and

Polson were some sort of edibles unknown in France, when a sob close by aroused her, and she turned round to find her mother in tears.

"Take me away—I can bear no more. Oh what sinister omens surround us!"

The poor lady, whose knowledge of the English language was by no means equal to her daughter's, had been for some time laboriously trying to decipher a certain placard on the wall before her. She had just discovered to her dismay that it was a cheerful announcement to the effect that a local undertaker offered to "perform her funeral in one of Shillibeer's hearses for the moderate charge," &c. The shock was more than Madame Arnould could bear. She implored them to take her away at once. "The air of that *triste* chamber would kill her. No, she could not drink the water from that bottle: it was nauseating to the sight." (Madame was right; the state of the second-class waiting-room water-bottle was disgraceful.) "The place rained soot. See! she was black already." (Madame looked disconsolately at her handkerchief.) "She

was stifling, and could not draw her breath. She must go to an hotel or she would die." And again the poor lady grew hysterical.

There was clearly nothing to be done but call a cab, and proceed to an hotel; for even Josephine began to despair of any one coming to their aid now. She was just about to start out with Madelon in search of a vehicle, when a big man, with a sun-burnt face and prodigious whiskers, put his head in at the door, and cried out to someone behind,—

"Of course,—I told you so. Here they are—the whole party! Beg your pardon. Madermazel Arnold and Moshoo Bertang, I believe?"

The speaker, who had a nautical air, and wore a nautical hat, took off the latter, and bowed awkwardly but cordially.

"Very sorry, I'm sure, this should have happened, and so will Mr. Crawford be. But when I got home and found you hadn't arrived, thought I'd better come on and see if there wasn't some mistake, which it's clear there is, madermazel."

The nautical-looking man turned to the young lady, for it was clear from their faces that the others did not understand a word he was saying. For a moment, Josephine had thought it was her uncle, and the shock had been rather great; for though a not unprepossessing-looking person, the stranger's appearance did not square with her notions of Mr. Crawford. Finding it was not he, she said, in her stiff, formal English, "Pardon me, sir, but I know not whom I address. If you are a friend of Mr. Crawford, perhaps you can help us."

He certainly looked a helpful sort of person, with that good-natured smile, and frank brown face.

"My name's Boss, miss. I can't rightly say I'm a friend of Mr. Crawford's, though I'm sure I'm not his enemy. We're well-acquainted anyhow, and it's in my house he's taken apartments for you and your family. Oui, mossoo, dang ma maisong," added Captain Boss, who had picked up a little French in the course of his voyages, and he turned and bowed to Monsieur Bertin, who

was vainly endeavouring to catch the drift of the conversation. "Comprenny-voo? Je suis Captain Boss—content de vous-voir—ma femme vous fera très confortable," and whilst the Captain tapped his chest to prove his identity, Monsieur Bertin smiled gratefully, and returned the Captain's bows at compound interest.

"Tell this gentleman, my dear, how sensible we are of his politeness. He invites us to his house, I believe?"

"What generous hospitality!" said Madame Arnould, drying her tears.

Josephine explained matters, and then begged the Captain's assistance in removing: a request which was instantly complied with; and in a few more minutes, the party quitted the station under the Captain's escort.

Now it happened that the moment of their arrival in Tyne Street was inauspicious. Mrs. Boss, who had given up all hope of her new lodgers' arrival that night, had gone to chapel; and Mrs. Boss's servant had taken advantage of her mistress's absence to run across the street to have a gossip with a

found. Consequently, there was no one to receive them on arriving, and things had a very desolate air. The sitting-room fire, which had burned brightly two hours ago, was now a heap of ashes: the tea-tray and other cloth had been removed: the holland covers replaced on the easy chairs. There was no air of welcome—not even an appearance of their being expected.

It was raining heavily when they alighted, and the travellers were damp and weary. The dull cheerless air of their room, the unfamiliar look of the furniture, the so (to them) un-home-like aspect of everything about them, struck a chill over Mrs. Desdemone's heart. Captain Ross hurried himself to make things comfortable, and aided by the conscience-stricken servant, soon got fires lighted, and the table spread: but Mrs. Ross returned home in the midst of matters, and was so vexed at what had happened (for she had set her heart on producing a favourable impression at first starting), that she lost her temper, and everything went wrong.

Mrs. Ross refused to speak except in mo-

nosyllables—hadn't any idea where the keys were to be found—was as ignorant of the number of spoons-full required to make good coffee, as though she had never heard of that beverage before—in short, Mrs. Boss's whole soul was engrossed in the hymn-book which she had brought home with her from chapel, and she sat and read it in a corner of the kitchen, with a pious determination that no mundane interruption could disturb. And yet Mrs. Boss could have cried with vexation all the time, at her own foolish conduct. She knew she was vexing her husband and adding to the unhappiness of these poor strangers, whose comfort she truly desired—if she could have brought it about in her own way, that is.

Josephine had a hard time of it, that first evening. Her grandfather subsided into silence and visible depression. The strangeness of the house, unnerved Madelon even. She had taken a peep into the kitchen, and its unfamiliar arrangements had filled her with dismay—the more so, that she had caught sight of its mistress sitting there,

with her hymn-book before her, in that awful fashion. Madame Arnould was simply prostrated by her emotions. Her bedroom had been a shock to her whole nervous system. It was a comfortable room enough to English notions, heavily draped and sombrely furnished, but essentially a room to sleep in, and nothing else. It contained no pretty sofa, nor writing-table, nor books, nor flower-stand, as in madame's old room at Fontainebleau; but was filled with dark mahogany furniture, and had a massive four-post bed, hung round with heavy moreen that looked like a catafalque. This sombre object, which occupied at least one-fourth of the room, had such a funereal air to the unaccustomed eye, that Madame Arnould with difficulty forbore a shriek as she entered. Madelon walked round it, and examined it, with hands uplifted in astonishment.

"It will not be for long," murmured madame, recurring to the old idea of an early close to her troubles; and she shook her head mournfully at the dreary pile of drapery before her.

But her daughter stole her arm round her waist, and whispered, "Courage, mother! Where are all our brave resolutions?"

Worn out by the fatigue and emotions of the day, Madame Arnould was asleep first of any one in the house. But Josephine lay awake far on into the night, and heard the bells of St. Jude's Church strike the hours with a strange unfamiliar sound. Disinclined as she was to look on the dark side of things, Josephine could not but feel that their reception was discouraging.

CHAPTER VI.

As they had arrived in the night, it was not until the following day that Josephine had any idea of the neighbourhood around her. On looking out from her window next morning, she beheld a strange and altogether new scene.

Tyne Street was situated in the upper part of the town, and commanded a view of countless roofs mingled with tall chimney shafts, and church spires, rising through a sea of smoke. Beyond, on one side, lay the port, with its masts and funnels ; on the other and more distant side, stretched a line of bleak hills. It was not a picturesque prospect, according to accepted notions, but it was a striking one, and told of a busy human life around. Josephine did not find it without interest, and remained gazing at

it until Madelon entered her room. The cheery-looking woman did not seem in very cheery spirits this morning.

"Don't know how I'll ever cook your meals here. Never saw such a place in my life,"—said Madelon, disconsolately. "Call that a kitchen! Why, there's neither stove nor charcoal, nor a pan to braize a bit of meat in!"

"But there is a handsome fire-grate, Madelon; and the fire blazed away so cheerfully last night, when I peeped in," said Josephine.

"Blazed! Ay, enough to burn the eyes out of your head. And all to boil a couple of eggs. If that's the way they use coal here, it had need be cheap. But *she* seems to think it all right!"

The satirical tone bespoke Madelon's contempt for Mrs. Boss's culinary attainments.

"She has laid aside her book this morning, and seems to have found her tongue. At least, she began chattering to me about the milk, as I judged from the jug in her

hand; but, on my soul, I never heard such rubbish; it was no better than Hebrew to me."

"You didn't expect her to speak French, eh?" said Josephine, laughing. "Come, come, Madelon, don't bring it as an accusation against Madame Boss, that she speaks her own language."

"Oh, she might speak Cochon-Chinese for what I care," said Madelon, who was clearly out of temper; "but I know what *omelette aux fines herbes* is as well as any one; and I don't like to see good food wasted, and when I know how delicate your appetites are, too! 'Leave it to me,' says I; 'madame clearly does not understand her business.' But she took no more notice of me than if I was an idiot, but stuffed in her pepper and onions until it made me almost sick to see her. The woman must be a fool!"


"Madelon!" said Josephine, looking at the excited face before her; "I am sorry to hear you speak like this."

"Well, and so would you be enraged. I

mean, Mademoiselle Josephine,—what am I saying?—I mean I—I—I don't know what's come to me. But the sight of that kitchen is more than I can bear," and the woman actually put her apron to her eyes and cried. "There, there!" she murmured; "I am an ungrateful wretch; but it shan't happen again;" and having relieved her feelings by this little outburst, Madelon regained her normal condition of good temper and good sense which the novel arrangements of an English kitchen had caused her to forfeit.

After breakfast Mr. Crawford arrived, accompanied by his eldest daughter. Miss Camilla Crawford had made a careful toilette for the occasion, and looked, as she always did look, a very stylish young lady. Some people might have felt Camilla's position to be a rather awkward one, but she was much less embarrassed at the prospect of meeting her relatives than her father, who could not but feel old memories revive at the sight of his first wife's relatives.

After the first embarrassed greetings had taken place, Mr. Crawford hastened to ex-



plain how it was there had been no one to meet them over-night. His carriage had been sent to meet the five o'clock express, by which they were expected; but it appeared that Josephine, unused to the study of "Bradshaw," had chosen a slow train by mistake. Mr. Crawford's family had only learned of their arrival that morning through a messenger dispatched by Captain Boss.

"My daughter and I hurried off at once to explain matters," said Mr. Crawford.

The explanation was held to be satisfactory by the persons to whom it was addressed, though Mr. Crawford's French necessarily left much to the imagination of his hearers. Matters improved somewhat after this. Madame Arnould essayed the little speech she had prepared for the occasion, and made some grateful allusions to Mr. Crawford's generosity. But the worthy man was not prepared with any graceful reply, as a countryman of madame's would have been. He only stammered and looked awkward, and sought another subject.

Meanwhile the young ladies were making progress on their side. Camilla spoke French very fairly. She "was extremely fond of conversing in foreign languages," she informed her cousin. "She liked Italian, though, better than all; did Josephine know Italian? Ah! that was delightful. They must read it together. She adored Dante. She hoped their tastes would be similar. It was so seldom one found a companion with congenial tastes. Did not Josephine think so?"

Josephine replied that she had scarcely ever had any intimate companion except her father, and their tastes had been very congenial.

"Ah! it was he who taught you to write English so cleverly, I suppose? Do you know, papa is quite delighted with your letters, and holds them up to us as models."

"My father taught me many things; but I owe my knowledge of your language chiefly to an English governess," said Josephine, gravely, for she could not mention her father's name with indifference.

"Do not say 'your language,' in that terrible grave way," said Camilla, rallyingly. "It must be 'our language,' henceforth. Now we have got you here, we mean to Anglicise you, I can assure you."


"But English is not my language," said Josephine, still as gravely as before. "I am prepared to speak it, and like it. But French will always be my language of preference, always."

This was said with a determination of tone that caused Camilla to look at her new cousin more closely than she had yet done.

"Not so amiable as I thought, but handsomer," was Camilla's mental criticism. "She has certainly got very fine eyes."

At this point, Mrs. Crawford and Alice arrived. It had been arranged that they should defer their visit for half an hour, for Mrs. Crawford had insisted that Camilla would find such an arrangement pleasanter, and Mrs. Crawford always understood other people's feelings. Nothing could be more gracious than the lady's demeanour towards her husband's relatives. Coming along in

her carriage, she had felt a little doubtful as to her ability to sustain a conversation in French; but when she got started, Mrs. Crawford was quite delighted with her own fluency, and her hearers were far too polite to show they did not understand above one word in every ten she uttered. So Mrs. Crawford rattled on with a sublime indifference to tenses and genders, and asked questions and made remarks which required almost superhuman intelligence for a foreigner to comprehend. Madame Arnould was quite charmed with this expansiveness of character. It was so unlike the English stiffness which she had expected to find in her brother-in-law's wife; unlike, also, the cold reserve of her niece, with whom Madame Arnould felt disappointed. She had fondly imagined that her sister's child would come running into the room and fling her arms round her neck with "*Ma chère tante!*" or some other affectionate greeting on her lips. But instead of that, Miss Crawford had sailed in, elegantly dressed, and put out her gloved hand, like a morning



caller, and called her grandfather "*Monsieur*," all through the interview. As for Alice, she was quite eclipsed by her mamma, and was too timid to utter more than half-a-dozen words in French, though she looked so kindly at them, that Josephine took a fancy to her at once.

"I know you speak English," said Alice, making bold at length to address Josephine, by whose side she sat. "We shall get on so much better if you will let me speak my own language. I am so stupid."

Alice blushed as she spoke, and Josephine assured her she should be happy to talk to her in whichever language she pleased.

"I want to know, first of all, how you like your rooms?" asked Alice.

"I am sure we shall like them very much when we are used to them. They seem strange to us at present, but they are very clean. It surprises me to find everything so white in this smoky atmosphere," said Josephine, looking at the curtains. "I call this quite a handsome room."

Mrs. Boss's drawing-room, if not furnished

on principles of correct taste, was at least effective. The carpet might be considered tawdry by some folks, and the paper staring; but the former was an undeniable Brussels, and the latter a "flock." If the furniture was lumbering, it was clean, and "not a bit of it secondhand," as Mrs. Boss often remarked; "though, as for ornaments, she did pick them up at sales, being things as you came on by luck and didn't want to match,"—as was evident from the miscellaneous art collection Mrs. Boss had got together.

"If there are any little changes you would like making, you must let us know," went on Alice, whose kindness was taking a practical form at once. "I'm not sure about the bedrooms; but you must let me come to-morrow and hear what alterations you can suggest. Papa is anxious—we are all anxious—that you should be made comfortable."

"You are very amiable. I am sure we shall soon understand each other," said Josephine, more and more charmed with her companion.

The other ladies of the family seemed to forget to make these little inquiries. Mrs. Crawford was very depreciatory as to English houses, and enthusiastic in her praises of foreign arrangements generally.

"I am afraid everything seems *dreadfully English* to you," said Mrs. Crawford, turning to Josephine with a persuasive smile. "You must have pity on us, though, and not draw severe comparisons."

Josephine replied, that as yet the word "English" had a very limited meaning to her mind, seeing she had only been a few hours in the country. But she disliked the speech, and the way in which it was uttered.


"We will try to create a good impression at Holly Hall when you come to see us, and that must be very soon," went on Mrs. Crawford, with the same effusion of manner. "When is it to be, Mr. Crawford?"

"Whenever madame feels able to come," was the reply, as they rose to take their leave. "I hope Monsieur Bertin," added Mr. Crawford, speaking to the old gentleman, by whose side he had been sitting,

“you will soon get to feel at home amongst us.”

Monsieur Bertin replied in grateful terms. If his son-in-law's manner was not expansive like his wife's, it was at least unmistakably sincere.

At leave-taking, Camilla was quite affectionate with Josephine, and called her “*ma cousine*,” in her prettiest fashion, and kissed her on both cheeks. But Josephine could have dispensed with these demonstrations, if Camilla had shown a little more attention to her grandfather. She had scarcely spoken to him throughout the visit. But then Camilla was a young lady of delicate sensibilities, and “shrank instinctively” (as she would have said) from anything rough or coarse; and Monsieur Bertin had undoubtedly rough hands, which looked as if they had not been unfamiliar with work in their time.



CHAPTER VII.

It was many days ere the Arnould family began to get accustomed to the new circumstances of their lives. Josephine was, naturally, the first to fall into the altered routine of things. Novelty, which only means discomfort and dissatisfaction for elderly people, is not without attractions at her age. But Josephine had her share of anxieties during these first weeks.

Her grandfather did not complain much, but it was evident that he suffered greatly from this breaking-up of the habits of a lifetime. Her mother kept to her sofa chiefly, and watered it with her tears. Everything around Madame Arnould either pained her by its novelty, or suggested unfavourable comparisons with the past. The poor lady, moreover, could not get over the fact that

Camilla had neither her mother's eyes nor nose,—a matter on which she dwelt with mournful insistancy.

As for Madelon and Mrs. Boss, they were already in a state of chronic misunderstanding.

As each persistently conversed with the other in her own language, they were naturally involved in endless mistakes, and matters were fast approaching a point when all communication between them would have to be carried on by signs. But there Madelon would undoubtedly have won the day. It was one of Mrs. Boss's frequent charges against her, that "she had so much action;" for nothing more irritated Mrs. Boss's Anglo-Saxon temperament than to behold the expressive gestures with which Madelon elucidated her words—gestures which Mrs. Boss stigmatised as "monkey-ways," and despised accordingly.

If it had not been for Josephine's judicious intervention on several occasions, the household could never have held together; but even her tact was at fault at times, and

her patience tried in new and unexpected ways.

For instance, the first Sunday evening was anything but encouraging. Josephine sat playing to her mother in the twilight on the old piano that stood in one corner of Mrs. Boss's drawing-room. Though Mrs. Boss was no musician herself, she could distinguish between sacred and secular strains; and as she sat in her parlour below, her ear told her that the music overhead was not of the former class. At first, Mrs. Boss listened in simple astonishment; but astonishment changed to something else when she recognised a waltz, and reflected that her neighbours, leaving chapel about this hour, could not fail to hear the profane sounds issuing from her first floor. "A cold shudder ran through me from head to foot," she told a friend, next day; and fired with righteous zeal, Mrs. Boss mounted to the drawing-room and requested the immediate cessation of the performance.

"I cannot have it, mem, I cannot indeed," said Mrs. Boss, quivering with emotion, and

crossing her hands tightly over her waistband. "I'm aware there's a difference between French and English notions on such subjects; but you'll please to remember you're in England now, mem, and we don't allow it here—we don't indeed."

At first Josephine did not understand what this virtuous indignation meant. That Mrs. Boss should object to the music she was playing on religious grounds, was a new and almost inconceivable idea.

"I shouldn't respect myself if I let it go on," continued Mrs. Boss. "And on my own pianer, which have never been put to such a use before; being the reason why I parted with one young gent, who otherways was very regular in his habits. No, mem, not if you was to offer to double the rent, could I sit in my own parlour below, and hear such-like on a Sabbath-day, which is not to be profanated in this country, as you'll find. And what is more, mem, I'm by no means sure that it isn't the police's duty to interfere," went on Mrs. Boss, getting angry at the impenitent faces before

her, (two out of her three hearers hardly understood a word she was saying,) "for they can stop organs and brass bands on the Sabbath-day, and they do, too, and fines them according."

"The police! Bon Dieu! what is the matter?" cried Madame Arnould, who had caught one intelligible word at last.

"Nothing, mother, nothing," said Josephine, and, turning to Mrs. Boss, she said,—

"I think, madame, you request me not to play the piano on Sunday evening, and on religious grounds; is it not so?"

"Certingly, mem; and I put it to you, as a Protestant, whether such isn't your bounden duty—not being Papists, as I was assured before you put foot in this house."

"We will not discuss the religious view of the question, if you please," said Josephine, coldly. "You object to my playing, and you say, I believe, that your neighbours would disapprove, and your character suffer. That is quite enough, madame; you shall not be troubled again," and Josephine

closed the piano, with a curled lip and heightened colour.

"What does this mean?" cried Monsieur Bertin, in French, looking very angry.

He had been quietly reading his Bible when Mrs. Boss entered; but Josephine's behaviour, and a word or two he had caught, had given him a clue to what was passing.

"Don't agitate yourself, grandpère. If the music gives offence, we can easily do without it," said his grand-daughter.

"But this is an unwarrantable interference, madame," said the old gentleman, turning angrily on Mrs. Boss. "A most absurd piece of bigotry. You must allow us to judge for ourselves how we ought to employ the Sunday. I had heard of your English intolerance before, but I could not have believed this possible. As you quote religious authority, madame, let me tell you that in this book I could sooner find a justification of my grand-daughter's occupation, than of your want of charity."

As this speech was delivered in French,

Mrs. Boss naturally did not understand it; but she interpreted it as a challenge to a religious controversy, which she instantly accepted.

Happily, Monsieur Bertin did not understand her line of argument—if a series of denunciatory quotations could be so called. But he knew enough to be aware that he and the whole French nation were being reviled as “atheists,” “Sabbath-breakers,” &c. Consequently, the good old man lost his temper, and assured Mrs. Boss in return, that she and her compatriots were a nation of pharisees and false professors; and his voice became so loud and angry, and his gestures so alarming, that Mrs. Boss was positively frightened, and beat a retreat.

Josephine looked with sorrow at her grandfather, as he sat trembling with excitement. The old man was already ashamed of his anger, and began to reproach himself for it.

“That is not the way to prove one’s-self in the right,” he said, shaking his head. “What infirm creatures we are!”

He returned to his book ere long, and sat with it open before him in silence.

"Josephine," he said, after a time, "I think I went too far. I should like to go down and ask madame's pardon. I must have hurt her feelings, I fear."


A beautiful flush passed over Josephine's face, as she looked at her grandfather, and a tear rose in her large grey eyes.

"I think that is what our Guide there would counsel us to do, dear grandfather," she replied, pointing to the book on his knee. "Let us go;" and they descended, hand in hand.

But Mrs. Boss, either from an imperfect comprehension of their intention, or from an inability to attain the same high level of feeling, did not meet them half-way, or respond as they had expected.

"She is a cold, severe woman, with little of the true Christian about her, I fear," remarked the old gentleman, with a sigh, as they returned discouraged to their room.

But the act had made a deeper impression than they thought upon Mrs. Boss; for this



ready acknowledgment of a fault, and desire to be at peace with one's neighbours, was, somehow, quite at variance with Mrs. B.'s preconceptions of a Sabbath-breaker and heretic's dispositions.

CHAPTER VIII.

It was evident to Josephine Arnould, after a short residence in England, that there were new ways of looking at almost all old questions in this new land. The difficulty was not to form erroneous impressions, and generalise too hastily.

It was hard, for instance, not to believe that there was intentional rudeness in the manners of most of the people about them. When Josephine went out marketing with Madelon, no one ever returned their salute ; the curt answer of the butcher and green-grocer surprised and affronted them. Madelon was highly scandalised by the want of courtesy amongst the stall-keepers on market-day. "It used to be a pleasure," said she, "to do one's marketings at home ; but here, it's all pushing and shoving, and

taking your money without a polite word or a bow. While, as for a pleasant joke, you might stay all day before you would hear one amongst them." But then Madelon forgot that what she termed "polite words and bows" would have been looked upon as "monkey-ways" by Mrs. Boss and many of her fellow-townspeople.

As soon as Josephine had become a little accustomed to her life, she proceeded to carry out a certain scheme she had long had in view. With this intent she set out, early one morning, accompanied by Madelon, for Mr. Crawford's place of business in Monk-fields. But the senior partner had not yet arrived; so, whilst Madelon waited in the outer room, Josephine was requested to walk into an inner and private office to await Mr. Crawford's coming.

A gentleman rose as she entered, and invited her to take a seat: it was Mr. Mathew Crawford, who put out his hand to greet her in English fashion; but Josephine took no notice of his hand, and only accorded him a bow, as became a young Frenchwoman.

"What absurd coquetry!" thought Mr. Mathew, ignorant of French usages. "Why couldn't she shake hands sensibly, as an English girl would have done?" and he pocketed his hand with an awkward air and a red face.

It was of course very unjust; but this trivial incident prejudiced him against Mademoiselle Arnould at starting.

They had not met before, for Mathew had been away from home on business. It was rather an embarrassing way of making the acquaintance. The gentleman resumed his writing, whilst the lady looked out of the window on a melancholy prospect of brick wall, old iron, and cinders.

"I don't know what makes my uncle so late," said Mathew, after a while, feeling the silence growing uncomfortable. "Would you like to look at the paper?"

He handed a damp local journal to Mademoiselle Arnould, as he spoke. It was not what a Frenchman would have done, probably—to give a young lady a journal devoted chiefly to mining news and the iron-

markets ; but Josephine thanked him and took the paper, with an inward commentary on the oddity of Mr. Crawford's manners. They sat thus,—the one writing, the other reading,—for some minutes. Occasionally, Mr. Crawford glanced at the lady, as he lifted his head for fresh ink, or other purposes. It was not quite the face he had expected—not at all like the ideal Frenchwoman he held as the national type. She was neither brown nor angular, neither chattering nor demonstrative. Nay, she had a pair of large grey eyes overshadowed with sweeping lashes that had a peculiarly thoughtful and (to Mr. Crawford's thinking) Saxon look. But still she was French. There was that in her dress and manner which at a glance proclaimed her nationality.

When his uncle arrived, Mathew stepped into the adjoining office, divining that Josephine desired to speak to him in private.

"What is it, my dear?" asked the worthy engineer, as he seated himself opposite her. "Any little alterations required in Tyne Street?"

"We have already taxed your kindness too far in these matters, I fear, monsieur. It is because I am sensible how much we owe to you, that—that I come to make a proposal to you."

Josephine hesitated a moment; a look from Mr. Crawford reassured her.

"It is not a sudden fancy," she continued, "but a fixed resolve that I had even formed before we left France. I desire to earn my own living, monsieur."

"A very laudable desire," said Mr. Crawford, with a smile, "but not a very practicable one, I think."

"Oh, yes, it can be done," said Josephine, earnestly. "I have well thought on it. I can teach French and music and a little Italian. I could give daily lessons in the town, if you would allow me, and earn fifty pounds a year, English money."

Mr. Crawford made no reply. He looked rather grave.

"Of course," continued Josephine, quickly, noticing his looks, "whatever I earn would be deducted from the allowance we receive

from you. Oh, monsieur, you surely do not think we are discontented with our income, and that I am only seeking to increase it!" Josephine's cheeks flushed as she spoke.

It was evident Mr. Crawford had thought so, for his face brightened again immediately.

"You have done for us much more than we had any right to expect," she went on; "but though I am not too proud to accept a home from you, I am too proud to remain idle, and incur any obligations I can escape."

The speech was uttered rather haughtily. Some people might have thought it an unbecoming speech; not so Mr. Crawford.

"That's the spirit I like!" he muttered; and he added aloud,—

"I don't know that you are not right, my dear; but I am afraid you will have difficulty in finding pupils."

"Not if you will help me, I think," said Josephine, readily. "Look," she added, with a smile, "Fortune is on my side! Here is some one in North Humberton who wants a governess well qualified in French," and she pointed to an advertisement that had

caught her eye whilst looking over the newspaper.

"Well, come and dine with us to-morrow night, and you and I will talk it over. I will call for you in Tyne Street at five o'clock. Be ready: I hate unpunctuality. The girls will be delighted to see you," and Mr. Crawford shook hands cordially with his niece, as she rose to depart.

That same evening Mrs. Crawford and her daughters were discussing the matter over the drawing-room fire at Holly Hall.

"For my part I think it a most preposterous idea," said Mrs. Crawford, angrily. "It can only be done to humiliate us before our neighbours. With the handsome sum your papa allows them, there can be no need for it. I call it downright ingratitude."

"But it will save papa's pocket," said Alice. "I think I can quite understand Josephine's feeling."

"At all events, you will allow, Alice, that it will be extremely disagreeable to meet one's cousin trudging through the streets as a daily governess whenever we drive into

the town," said Camilla. "I do think Josephine ought to show more consideration for us."

"Consideration! Oh, dear, we needn't look for that," laughed Mrs. Crawford, bitterly. "Your papa thinks it all right. I suppose he will expect us to canvass for pupils, and leave circulars with our cards whenever we make calls."

It was evident from the lady's acrimonious tone that she had been discussing the matter with her husband in private, and that Mr. Crawford had been displaying a little of what his wife termed "his usual obstinacy."

But this did not prevent the lady giving a gracious reception to Mademoiselle Arnould on the morrow. She kissed her, and patted her on the cheek, and said, "She put them all to shame with her industry. She was a honey-bee amongst drones, she feared. How charming it was to be energetic, and able to battle with fortune; and then to make her own dresses as she did, and in such perfect taste! Really, her cousins would be jealous."

All of which commendations, Josephine received with a cold air. She instinctively distrusted Mrs. Crawford and her fulsome speeches.

Mathew was of the party that night. He watched Josephine with considerable interest. Though her foreign accent was very perceptible, he was obliged to own she spoke English remarkably well. He was amused at the discernment she displayed in her conversation with his uncle. As a Frenchwoman, he expected she would only talk on the most frivolous subjects; but mademoiselle was actually conversing with Mr. Crawford on iron-casting, workmen's wages, and such dry topics, with an air of interest, too! "It was certainly the perfection of tact, and admirable as a piece of acting," he reflected.

Mademoiselle did not take much notice of Mr. Mathew Crawford, or seem much impressed by his presence. She was decidedly disappointed in that gentleman. Alice had been constantly singing his praises to her of late, and she had expected to meet a sort of

model English gentleman ; whereas, to her eyes, Mr. Crawford seemed only a taciturn man, with a handsome face, but unprepossessing manners. Alice noticed the impression that was being produced, and resolved to break the ice fast forming between the two, and put them on better terms.

"Come here, Mathew," said she, beckoning to her cousin, as he entered the drawing-room after tea. "I was just talking about you, and finding fault. I want you and Josephine here to become good friends, and you are neither of you behaving at all nicely. You have scarcely spoken a word to each other yet."

Now, Mathew Crawford had no talent for *badinage*. He could not, for his life, have made a funny reply, as some men would have done. With his matter-of-fact air, he answered,—

"You can't expect absolute strangers to find topics of conversation, like old friends."

"But you are not absolute strangers," said Alice. "You are cousins, and ought to behave as such."

"Cousins! How do you make that out, Alice? I can scarcely claim cousinship with Mademoiselle Arnould, I think."

"Make it out! Oh, very easily. Didn't you once teach me in one of your college books that 'things which are equal to the same thing are equal to one another'? Very well, then, if you are cousin to me, and Josephine is cousin to me, you must be cousins to one another. Isn't that logic?"

They all laughed; and Mathew said if such reasoning as that was the result of his lessons to his cousins, he would never teach a lady geometry again.

"Do English ladies learn geometry?" asked Josephine, raising her head from her netting.

"When they have pedantic cousins," whispered Alice, "who think meanly of women's reasoning powers."

"I suppose in French places of education for young ladies that is an interdicted subject," said Mathew, somewhat superciliously.

"I don't know much about French places

of education. I was taught at home," replied Josephine, briefly.

"Indeed! Then you are not acquainted with the *vie du couvent* or the Parisian boarding-schools, about which one reads so often in French books?"

"Certainly I am not acquainted with convents. We are Protestants," said Josephine, looking up from her netting with an air of surprise.

"Ah, yes, of course; I was forgetting," returned Mathew. "I believe, then, I may safely say, mademoiselle, that you have escaped an experience which is no loss to you."

"I don't know; I am not competent to pronounce on the merits of boarding-schools or convents," said Josephine, in rather a stately manner. She added, pointedly, "It is the English parents, I believe, who send their Protestant children to Catholic schools, not we French people. We think it very strange indeed to do so."

"The English are generally considered strange by foreigners, I believe," said Mathew, with somewhat of Anglican self-

sufficiency of manner. "We are used to being called eccentric. The fact is, there are not many points of resemblance and sympathy between ourselves and most other nations, I expect."

"Indeed! How is that, pray?" said Josephine. "You do not claim a different origin to the rest of mankind, I suppose? I never heard of a separate creation confined to this island."

Mathew looked a little surprised at this irony.

"Differences of education, and the different course of our political and religious history are the chief causes, I imagine," he replied. "There are certain nationalities we fraternise with more readily than others, but—" he paused, following out his thought in silence.

"But the French are not amongst the privileged number, I suppose?" asked Josephine. "Poor French people!"

"On the contrary: if you place faith in modern seers, you will learn that the alliance of the French and English is to be

the great fact of future European history. There are writers on both sides of the Channel who discern all sorts of moral and political benefits to flow therefrom."

"Which you consider an amiable delusion, monsieur, I suppose?"

"I don't quite know what I think myself," said Mathew. "But would it not be well for French and English men to know each other a little more intimately before they rush into each other's arms and swear eternal friendship? It remains yet to be seen whether there is any solid sentiment at the bottom."

"But how are they ever to get to know each other if they keep up the old distrust, that comes from centuries of fighting and quarrelling?" said Alice, joining in. "Really, Mathew, one would think you like to be on bad terms with your neighbours. Pray get up and open the piano for us, and don't let us hear another word about 'nationalities.'"

Mathew smiled, and obeyed his cousin with the leisurely air peculiar to his movements in thoughtful moods. He was think-

ing of the subject, which really interested him. Josephine set down this nonchalance for something very like rudeness.

"Yes, he was certainly a disagreeable person," she thought to herself.

But of her uncle, Mademoiselle Arnould had quite another opinion. It was a great happiness to find she could like and esteem their benefactor. He drew her aside, that evening, before they retired, and said,—

"I have thought over the matter you named to me yesterday, and you have my consent. Of course, you can name us as references."

Josephine thanked him less in words than in the expression of her face, which beamed with gratitude.

CHAPTER IX.

MADemoiselle ARNOULD's correspondence with the advertiser proved successful, and a few days later she found herself under an engagement as daily governess in the family of a clergyman in North Humberton.

The Reverend Arthur Handleigh, the incumbent of St. Jude's, (a poor and thickly populated parish with a small stipend attached,) was a widower with one daughter. He had only recently been presented to the living, and many people could not understand how a man with his family influence (Mr. Handleigh had a cousin who had been a cabinet minister, and an uncle who was a dean) had accepted such a paltry position; and the oddest part of it was that he had a private fortune, and had no need to work "like a poor curate." Mr. Handleigh's

sister, a lady older than himself, kept his house, and a more quiet, happy and decorous little household could not be found amongst the quiet and decorous little households of England.

Since their residence in North Humberton, the Handleighs had not made many acquaintances amongst their wealthier neighbours, and this was generally attributed to their pride; "for of course," it was argued, "folks with their connections were proud, and looked down upon merchants and shopkeepers." But the few people who had made their private acquaintance did not get this impression. Mathew Crawford, for instance, had found Mr. Handleigh an extremely pleasant neighbour. They had met frequently on committees, &c. (the Works were in the parish of St. Jude), and always got on very well together; indeed, the acquaintance had gradually ripened into a warm friendship.

When Mrs. Crawford learned that it was in this family that Josephine had obtained an engagement, she was exceedingly angry.

Mrs. Crawford strongly desired the further acquaintance of the Handleighs, (as yet they had only exchanged calls,) for private reasons of her own.

She had, in fact, set her eye on the new Vicar of St. Jude's as a husband for Camilla. For though a widower with a daughter nine years old, he was not more than eight and thirty years of age; and Camilla had hitherto been very unfortunate in her love affairs, and it was becoming high time she was married and settled. And now, of course, the Handleighs would cease to visit with them, reasoned Mrs. Crawford.

But if the good lady's matrimonial projects were likely to be disappointed in one quarter, there seemed a prospect of their realisation in another. Mathew had been a frequent visitor at Scarsdene of late, and though his visits were said to be connected with the cottage-building project, it was hardly possible that his interest in that scheme could account for the number of times he had ridden over to Mrs. Vincent's lately. "Depend upon it, there is some-

thing besides business takes him there," said Mrs. Crawford, sagaciously ; but her husband only smiled and said he " began to think Mathew was not a marrying man ; and, for his part, he really did not think he and Miss Vincent were cut out for each other, though of course there was a pretty fortune on either side."


But Mathew himself knew quite well that it *was* something besides his interest in Miss Vincent's philanthropic schemes that took him so often to Scarsdene. He was not a man to shut his eyes to facts, or wilfully delude himself ; if so, it would have been easy to satisfy himself that it was his desire to help his uncle in his duties as executor that caused these frequent visits to Scarsdene. But he knew well enough that his own inclinations led him that way ; that he found the evenings pass away more quickly and pleasantly in the drawing-room at Scarsdene, than in his own bachelor rooms ; and, furthermore, he was beginning to be aware that he was always a welcome guest there. Miss Vincent was so natural and outspoken,

that she would soon have let him know had his visits not been agreeable to her.

"Perhaps," he reflected, "Camilla is right, and she does care for me, poor girl!"

Now, in making this reflection, Mr. Crawford was not the conceited coxcomb he might seem at first sight. He was, in some matters, a very unobservant man; and as he had been on friendly terms with Lilian Vincent ever since she wore pinafores, it is probable he would never have suspected any change in their old relations, if it had not been for the whispers and innuendoes of his lady friends.

"She is very handsome," he reflected, one night, as he rode home from a dinner-party with a vision of Lilian in a white silk and pearls shining before him in the dark; "and she entertains her friends with much spirit. I wonder how such a weak and feeble-minded person as her mother ever came to have such a daughter. I think she is truthful, too. She cannot tolerate 'white lies,' and often offends folks by her plain-speaking. On the whole, there is the making of a fine



character and a good wife in such a woman, I suspect."

Not the language of an ardent lover this ! But Mathew Crawford had for some time past begun to think that love as he had read of it in books was a very rare thing in this world ; and he was fast coming to a conclusion that if he waited until he experienced the passion, as there depicted, he should remain single all his life. He had an ideal of his own of what a woman should be, it is true ; and it is equally true that Miss Vincent did not quite correspond therewith. "But then," he reflected, "she had the sterling qualities and rough homely virtues that best stand the wear and tear of everyday existence ; and if a man wanted his life to be successful and free from blame, he must choose a partner in whom these qualities predominated." And Mathew Crawford heaved a little sigh as he thus pondered.

For our hero (if we may claim the title for a man of such a prosaic cast of mind) did very much desire a blameless and successful life, and had a very firm conviction

that it depended upon the individual himself how far he attained the same. He was intolerant towards men who made a muddle of their affairs, whether domestic or pecuniary.

He intended his own life to be free from any such mistakes, even if it was not the brilliant and joyous affair he had once anticipated.

Riding down to Scarsdene, one moonlight evening, pondering such thoughts, he came upon two people walking under the leafless trees that skirted the park fence. It was a favourite walk for the North Humberton folks,—lovers especially favoured it; and the two persons before him looked like lovers to judge from their sauntering pace. Yes, it was Russell, the foreman, and his sweetheart, as he found on approaching nearer.

“Well, Russell, have you got the day named yet?” asked Mr. Crawford laughingly, as he came up beside them. “You must not try his patience too far, Hannah.”

“Oh, sir, he’s willing to wait,” replied the young woman, whose blushes the kindly night concealed.

"No, he ain't; and, what's more, he oughtn't to," said Russell, in a gruff, aggrieved voice. "When a man's the wrong side o' thirty he ain't no time to lose—that is, if he wants to see his bairns growed up and able to do for themselves, as a man should. That's where I look at it, and so I tell thee, my lass."

"And a very practical and proper way of looking at it, too," said Mathew. "Better give up your needle, Hannah, and take to making your husband's house comfortable. You won't be young twice, remember," and he bade them good-night, and rode on fast.

A quarter of an hour later, his horse was panting in the stable, and he was standing by the drawing-room fire at Scarsdene, looking at the red coals with a thoughtful face. The ladies had not yet quitted the dining-room, for he was earlier than usual.

"If I thought I was unduly influenced by her wealth," he said to himself, as he glanced round the handsome apartment, "I would ride back again without uttering a word. The world will say it is her money I seek,

of course; but ought I to let that weigh with me? My own means would enable me to marry a beggar if I chose, and in these matters I profess to despise the opinion of the world. I think I can make her happy, and if ever I am to marry,—a point on which my friends seem fully determined,—I don't suppose I shall find——”

The door opened at that moment, and the entrance of Miss Vincent cut short his meditations.

“We are late to-night,” said she, shaking hands. “But I have been driving mamma over to Honiston this afternoon, and we did not sit down to dinner until seven. She has got a dreadful headache with the wind, and has gone to bathe her head with eau-de-cologne, before tea. We did not expect you to-night, Mr. Crawford.”

“I did not expect I was coming,” he replied.

“Then you have not brought the architect's plans for me to look at?”

“No, I came on a purely personal errand,” he answered, after a little pause.

"Indeed!" Miss Vincent looked up at him, and changed colour as she did so.

She was always handsome, and her face, at that moment, lighted up by surprise and some inner excitement, looked unusually so.

"Yes, I came to consult you on a question of great—the greatest importance to myself," he said, seriously.

He stopped for a moment, as though not knowing how to proceed. But he was not so much embarrassed as she was. She had changed colour at once.

"Miss Vincent," he went on in a grave voice; "we have known each other for some time, and I think we are tolerably acquainted with one another's characters and dispositions. If there are points of contrast between us, I am sure there are also points of resemblance. I may seem abrupt in what I am about to say, but I know you like plain-speaking, and if I am making a mistake you will pardon it, I hope, in an old friend. Is it possible, I want to know, that you and I can ever stand towards each other in any closer relation than that of *friend*?"

To expect a direct affirmative reply to such a question would have been unreasonable. But Mr. Crawford was quite satisfied that he was not stopped. Encouraged by Miss Vincent's silence, he went on,—

“Before you answer my question let me add a word. You have lately come into possession of a large fortune, and will soon have suitors in abundance, no doubt. It might be taking an ungenerous advantage of our old acquaintance were I to try and bind you by any promise just now; I would rather you should remain free at present and have time to know your own mind. I should not be thus scrupulous, perhaps, were you poor instead of very rich. All that I feel entitled to ask, for the present, is that I may continue my visits, in order that—that you may learn to know and like me well enough to enter upon an engagement ere long.”

Learn to like him, forsooth! If he could but have read her heart at that moment, and known the cold surprise with which she heard his words! Misinterpreting her silence, he went on,—

"But, perhaps, I am wrong altogether—perhaps there is someone else who has a better right to ask of you what I ask?"

She shook her head without looking up.

"Then, Lilian," he replied, taking her hand in his, "I may hope that this further knowledge of each other will draw us closer together every day. It is not your fortune I seek, but *you*. Of course every man would tell you that; but I am not in want of money, as you know; and I should wish every penny you possess to be settled upon you, as your friends might think best."

"I trust," she said, in a low voice, "I shall never marry a man who wants my money, not me. It is already a bug-bear with me—this horrible idea."

She could have said nothing more calculated to raise herself in his eyes.

"You shall feel well assured you have not that to fear when you swear to 'love and honour' me," he answered with more tenderness in his voice than it had hitherto expressed. "But when that day comes there will be no misgivings on either

side, but perfect and entire confidence, I trust."

And then, at that moment, Mrs. Vincent was heard approaching through the inner drawing-room.

"Well, then," he murmured, as he pressed her hand in his, "remember, if *you* are still free, I consider myself bound from *this* hour."

And that was all that passed between them.

It was not quite the way in which Mathew Crawford had expected to "tell his love," when, in by-gone days he used to picture that interesting event. Nor did it perhaps quite correspond with Miss Vincent's pre-conceptions of a "declaration;" but, at any rate, Mr. Crawford had shown much delicacy and consideration, as the heiress reminded herself that night, when thinking it all over, though some people might have thought he pushed those estimable qualities too far on the present occasion.

CHAPTER X.

THE following letters, written by Mademoiselle Arnould to an old friend in France, will serve to convey her impressions, and to carry on the story of her life in her own words. The letters are addressed to the Reverend Achille Aublais, Protestant Pastor, Nîmes, Le Gard, the birth-place of Mademoiselle Arnould and of her father.

LETTER I. (translated).

“MY DEAR MONSIEUR AUBLAIS,

“Now that your kind and most welcome letter assures me that I am forgiven for having concealed from you the extent of our misfortunes, I resume a correspondence, which in past days has afforded me such consolation and profit. But let me once again repeat, that it was

no doubt of your willingness to aid us, that deterred me from applying to you (to whom should I so readily address myself as to the oldest and dearest friend of my beloved father?); but it was the knowledge of the many claims you already have upon your income, and the noble uses to which it is devoted, that kept us silent. But I am forgiven, and need say no more.

“You want to know more about our lives here, and I am impatient to tell you that Mr. Crawford’s generosity has placed us in a very comfortable position. We owe a debt of gratitude to him, which I should feel onerous, were it not that I am learning to like him better every day. With some other members of his family I am not so favourably impressed. My cousin, Camilla, is very handsome, but I think she cannot resemble her mother in character, for she seems vain and selfish. Mrs. Crawford is always demonstratively kind to me; but I am sure she is an insincere woman, and I distrust and dislike her. I can see the frown upon the face of my good, benevolent

friend, as he reads that last sentence. 'Still rash in judgment,' he murmurs; 'still wanting in tolerance.' Ah, dear monsieur, I fear the old faults exist still, as in the days when our dear pastor found a certain little girl in his class who said she 'did not think it right to forgive her enemies, though she could forgive her friends a thousand, thousand times.'

"But if I am severe upon those I do not esteem, I am, at least, full of admiration for those I love. Mademoiselle Alice, the second daughter, is charming and very amiable. She frequently comes to pass a day with us, and mamma is delighted to have her, for though she cannot speak French very well, she can make herself understood,—and besides, kind actions need no translation. Grandpapa is becoming quite fond of her (he was sadly disappointed in Camilla, though he does not like to own it), and we give her reading lessons in French, over which we laugh very much. There is one other member of the family—Mr. Crawford's nephew and partner. He

is a handsome and, I understand, a clever man; but, whatever his abilities may be, he impresses me as being very prejudiced, and not very agreeable. He has apartments in the street in which we live; but we see very little of him.

“Now as to those general impressions of this new land, on which you question me, I feel some little diffidence in expressing my opinions. My judgments may seem rash and prejudiced to your calm, well-balanced, mind; but then I know you like candour, and it is a pleasure to tell one’s thoughts frankly to an old friend.

“First, I think I may say, without undue severity, that, judging from a three months’ experience, the climate deserves the ill-reputation it has amongst us. So many rainy days, so much cloud and mist, so little sun, I never remember in any three months of my life. I think also that it would not be libellous to state that North Humberton is the blackest and gloomiest town I ever beheld, and that it contains more ugly buildings and tall chimneys (to say nothing

of smoke) than I ever thought it possible for one town to contain. The houses are built of dull-red bricks, with no nice, green *jalousies*, or pretty balconies. We look out upon a sea of roofs (our house is in the upper part of the town) mostly shrouded in smoke, but now and then the smoke parts open and we catch a range of distant hills. From my own room I can see the masts and funnels in the port, and a strip of sea but beyond. But it is not like the sea as I remember it on the shores of the Mediterranean; but a dull-grey wintry sea, that speaks of storm, and saddens me to look at.

“Of the social life and manners here I find my impressions constantly varying. Sometimes I think the English the coldest and least amiable people under the sun; then again, some unexpected act of kindness quite upsets that opinion. The lower classes are strangely wanting in courtesy; but I am not sure that this is not the result of the example set by those above them. There is a haughty way of treating inferiors here,

and a want of consideration towards them which quite pains me. I have noticed this, when going shopping with Mrs. Crawford and Camilla; but their behaviour seems to excite no surprise in the people whom they address.

“Of one thing I am sure—namely, that there are certain social prejudices common here, which are rare with us, and a way of measuring everything by a money standard, which I trust it will be long ere we see in France. Though the English are great workers and proud of their industrial success, they seem to take pains to hide the fact whenever their own fortunes have been made by trade. Mrs. Crawford was very vexed when she found that I had learned (through our landlady) that her husband’s father had been a working-man—though in my innocence, I thought it a subject for congratulation. But what is far worse, I find that Camilla actually looks down upon my dear grandfather, and is *ashamed* of him. Can you believe it? She had the effrontery to ask me not to tell any-

one here that he was once in trade in Paris, and I find (through Miss Handleigh) that she has given out to her friends that he is of an ancient Huguenot family who lost their property in the revolutionary troubles. His taste for practical mechanics is set down as mere eccentricity. She has not the sense, nor the heart, to discern the noble qualities of my dear, dear grandfather. You ask how he supports this expatriation. With the fortitude which was to be expected from his Christian faith; but he suffers!—oh, monsieur, he suffers. Write and comfort him, I beg. Your letters are great consolations to him—to us all. Every line that comes from my own dear country has a value to me now that you can scarcely understand.

“I have many more things to say, but I leave them for future letters. Asking you to believe always in the unalterable regard and gratitude of

“Your affectionate god-child,

“JOSEPHINE ARNOULD.”

LETTER II.

“DEAR MONSIEUR AUBLAIS,

“Once more I have to thank you for a charming letter which came like sunshine upon us. Yes, literally! For your letter tells us of warm spring days, and leafy vines and fig-trees, and open windows to welcome back the sun; whilst here we cower by the hearth, and out of doors are bare branches, with bitter winds and leaden—oh such leaden skies! Looking out on the cold black prospect of smoke and cloud before my windows, I can scarcely realise that there are folks on this earth gathering strawberries for breakfast this morning, or that a certain garden I know is gay with flowers, and its little fountain a pleasant object in the morning sun. Oh monsieur! I pine for sunlight and summer air. I feel at times as if I must rush back to my own land, cost what it may. It grows worse—this home-sickness. I dream, night after night, of Fontainebleau, or more often of our old home at Nîmes—of the great stone Triton in the fore-court with his melancholy eyes—

of the little salon all blue and gold, and the bench by the orange trees where you and my father used to sit discussing pagan philosophy and the religion of Christ. And then, when I awake and find myself in an English bed-room, with foreign voices in the street and a northern wind roaring in the chimney, I am weak enough to weep.

“But enough of this ; I want to give you those further particulars you ask for about my engagement as governess, a step which I knew you would approve. Well, the more I see of the family the better I like them. The formal manners of Miss Handleigh rather frightened me at first, but she is an intelligent and a good woman. Her little niece, my pupil, is an affectionate child and speaks French very nicely. They lived some years abroad (her mother was very delicate and died at Cannes), and all the family are good linguists. Mr. Handleigh is very learned, I believe ; he seems kind and considerate, and has shown my mother and grandpapa many attentions. Altogether, there is a different tone in this household to

any I have yet seen in England—a liberality of judgment quite unlike the ‘insular intolerance’ we consider characteristic of English people. They evidently do not consider us radically inferior by nature, as some English folks do; nor do they regard our Protestantism as a spurious and heterodox form of Christianity scarcely worthy of the name. On these points they sympathise with, and enter into our views in a way which no one else here does. Mr. Handleigh works very hard in his parish, and has great influence, I hear, amongst the working-men who form the bulk of his parishioners. I am told that he has declined higher offices in the English church in order to work in this humble, but useful field. Through his agency I have met with an afternoon engagement, and so my time is fully occupied. As I am just about to set out for my new pupils, I must say no more to-day. Write to us soon, dear monsieur, and ever believe me,

“Yours gratefully,

“JOSEPHINE ARNOULD.”

"I forgot to tell you that Mr. Crawford, the younger, is said to be affianced to a great heiress. She is very handsome, I hear, and I believe every one is very pleased."

LETTER III.

"DEAR MOSNIEUR AUBLAIS,

"I want to tell you about this new engagement which Mr. Handleigh has procured for me. But, first, let me sketch our interior, as at this moment I have it before my eyes. It is night, and our curtains are drawn, our lamp is lighted, and the coffee is on the side-table, while a great fire of coals sheds a delicious glow around. In her easy chair sits mamma knitting, and I think dozing, by the expression of her face; grand-papa sits opposite, reading the last number of *La Revue des Deux Mondes*, which Mr. Handleigh has sent him; and Madelon is at the side-table, mending stockings. I have a heap of French exercises by my side which I have just corrected, and so am now at liberty to do what I like for the rest of the

evening. What I like best to-night is to write to you.

“But I want to tell you about this new engagement. I suppose I am a very lucky person, for I am called to no less an honour than that of instructing the daughters of Popham Bloxham, Esquire (I see the name, thus written, staring me all over in placards, circulars, &c.), a gentleman who has the largest house and the largest fortune of any one in this neighbourhood. Mr. Bloxham is a member of the great British Parliament, a Director of Railways (an esteemed honour here, I believe), and the first partner in a large banking house. I believe he began life as a shoemaker’s apprentice, and entered this town, at fourteen, in a pair of boots with holes in them, and eighteen sous in his pocket. By what processes the eighteen sous became a million sterling I am unaware; but no doubt Mr. Bloxham is a man of commanding talent, and (though I have not yet seen him) I am greatly disposed to admire him. I cannot say that his wife excites any great admiration in my mind,

though she seems a kind motherly sort of woman, with an impression that I am always hungry, to judge from the cakes and wine that she sends up for my refreshment. Her education appears to have been neglected; but she seems to have a great respect for education in the abstract, and has spared neither money nor pains, she tells me, upon her daughters. 'They speak French like natives, I'm sure,' said she, 'and it is no wonder considering they've had a French nurse ever since they could run, and it isn't grammar of any sort they require, for they've been brought up on grammar, but it's for conversation I want you, my dear; just to come and talk about anything that comes into your head, in your own tongue.' This might not be a disagreeable task were it not that my pupils evidently regard the French language (as all their other studies, indeed,) merely as a means to an end, and that end—display in society. If it were the custom here to interlard conversation with scraps of Japanese, there would be native governesses engaged to teach it in all well-

regulated families, and the Misses Bloxham would no doubt chatter that tongue as fluently and as incorrectly as they do French. But, at any rate, they are good-natured, though rather boisterous girls, and, if they can get me out into the park in their own pony-carriage, which they drive themselves, they are as happy as possible.

“Speaking of that, we were driving out the other day when we encountered another phaeton, also driven by a lady, (these Englishwomen are admirable coachmen, you must know,) and the lady proved to be no other than Miss Vincent, the heiress, to whom Mr. Mathew Crawford is engaged. She stopped to talk with her friends, and I had an opportunity of looking at her and finding that her beauty has not been exaggerated. ‘Is this Mademoiselle Arnould?’ said she, turning to me. ‘I thought I was never to have the pleasure of seeing you. I don’t know what your friends are about never to ask me to meet you. You must come and see us at Scarsdene, mademoiselle, and if you like those things’ (pointing to a

bouquet of azaleas my pupils had given me), 'I will give you a heap. Good-bye, girls; mind you bring mademoiselle next time you come to see me,' she cried, in an amazonian voice, and drove off, leaving me with the impression that she was pleasant, original, and frank, but a little too masculine.

"This letter seems to be all about myself; and I wanted to tell you some good news about grandpapa. He seems decidedly more cheerful and settled. He has found a companion in Captain Boss, the husband of our landlady—that severe person with whom Madelon does battle so frequently. Monsieur le Capitaine is as unlike his wife as possible, and, though he has the mien of a corsair, he possesses the heart of a child. He talks the drollest French possible; but, somehow, grandpapa and he contrive to understand each other, and it is delightful to hear them conversing together, in a language (it is neither French nor English) they have invented for their own private use. Grandpapa is very fond of strolling about the port with Captain Boss, who is pleased to explain

things to him, and I think also, is not averse to let his fellow-townsmen know that he can talk French. Sometimes grandpapa encounters a captain from Havre or Cherbourg, or one or other of our own ports, and then he is happy, as you may conceive, and he comes home with a radiant face to tell us all about our pleasant countryman. But however pleasant he may be, grandpapa cannot pledge him in a glass of good Bordeaux as he would in France, for there are no cafés nor restaurants here, and people only drink strong drinks in dull, uninviting places they call public-houses and taverns.

“Good night, dear monsieur. Mamma is looking rather weary of her knitting, and I think a game at backgammon would enliven her.

“She accepts the challenge; so I bid you affectionately good-bye.

“JOSEPHINE.”

“P.S. There are two things I find it difficult to get used to in the English habits—(don’t laugh at me)—one is the absence of

dinner-napkins at breakfast; the other, the strange mixture of foods that is eaten at one time, and on one plate. At a dinner-party at Mr. Crawford's last night I counted on a gentleman's plate *five* different cooked articles, besides turkey. The mélange was frightful to behold."

— *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 1997

[illegible]

... IN THE FRENCH CITY
... THE FRENCH ...
... THE FRENCH ...
... THE FRENCH ...
... THE FRENCH ...
... THE FRENCH ...

She walked passed away from her the
of, out of Hawthorne's "History of the Giron-
-tion on the tower before her, and got up to
either the big wheel that lay stretched by
the window.

"I don't think my services will be worth much if we go on at this rate," said Josephine with a smile; "this is hardly respectful to your instructress."

"Instructress! Nonsense! Don't talk as though you were a paid governess. If you are good enough to come and stay a week with me, and talk French whenever I am not too idle, you put me under a great obligation of course. The only way you can lessen it is to make yourself at home here, and order about just as you please. Now, what would you like to do? Drive over to Dunge Head, or go fishing with me? Or would you rather stop here and read, and eat chocolate? I have got such a supply for you. What, you don't like them? Well, I am amazed! I thought (excuse me) that a Frenchwoman could not exist without two things, flattery and bon-bons—and in both I find I am mistaken. I saw how vexed you looked last night under the loud praises of your aunt."

"Mrs. Crawford's flatteries are too coarse to please anybody, I should think. Why will

she always persist in drawing attention to my industry, &c., as though such virtues were unknown amongst women? I believe she thinks they are amongst Frenchwomen." Josephine's cheek reddened a little as she spoke.

"Ah! ah! That's right," laughed Miss Vincent. "Stand up for your own country, my little patriot. I know I wouldn't let 'Old England' be abused by your folks if I were on the other side of the Channel; and really some English people are very prejudiced I am beginning to think."

Miss Vincent was silent a minute, and then resumed, as though thinking aloud,—

"I won't give way to it, you know. One must assert one's own independence at times. I am resolved that I will get to speak French well, let him disparage it as he likes."

At first, Josephine did not quite understand the speech, but light dawned upon her in the next words.

"He considers it all very well for light conversation and the display of wit," went on Miss Vincent; "but he says there is no

solidity about it, and nothing original in the literature. He wants me to learn German, and I won't. I don't pretend to care for literature. I intend to speak French, if only to show him that one can have an opinion of one's own, and isn't always obliged to adopt other people's."

"You are speaking of Mr. Mathew Crawford?" inquired Josephine.

"Yes, and you will oblige me very much by always talking French to me in his presence. He understands it well enough, though he is shy of speaking before you."

"Rather odd motives, these, for learning a language," thought Josephine. But there were so many things odd about Miss Vincent—the sudden liking she had conceived for Josephine herself, for instance; a liking which had displayed itself in many pleasant ways however; in visits to Tyne Street with presents of flowers and fruits; in placing her carriage frequently at Madame Arnould's disposal; and lastly, in her coming and carrying off Josephine to spend a week of her holidays at Scarsdene, as she had done.

"Which then, is it to be?" asked Miss Vincent, returning to her previous inquiry.

"Oh, Dunge Head," said Josephine. "I like so much your pretty white ponies, and that wild view from the bold headland."

From Dunge Head, where the air blew fresh from the Northern Sea, and a glimpse of its grey waters was caught, the ladies drove to Dunge Heath, the neighbourhood of the coal pits, where the cottage building project was going on. Miss Vincent gave the reins to the groom, and they alighted to inspect the works, under the guidance of Mr. Ness, the contractor, who came to the carriage to assist them to get out. Now Mr. Walter Ness, of the firm of Ness and Nixon, was *not* a mere ordinary house-builder, but an architect with large architectural notions, who built churches and town-halls, and had a very good opinion of himself. He drove good horses, dressed well, and was accounted one of the best-looking bachelors in the neighbourhood. But there was an air of assurance about him which Josephine disliked at once.

Perhaps Miss Vincent was used to this manner, or less susceptible on such points, but she seemed quite at her ease with Mr. Ness, and not at all displeased by his attentions.

Whilst they were engaged in looking round, Mr. Mathew Crawford came up on horseback. He was in the habit of inspecting the progress of the works almost daily. This was done partly to relieve his uncle, under whose advice Miss Vincent was acting, partly from his own personal interest in matters.

Now, instead of feeling properly grateful to Mr. Crawford for this service, Miss Vincent rather resented it as an assumption of rights and duties which as yet he was not entitled to claim.

"Who would have thought of seeing you here, at this hour?" was her greeting, as he rode up to them. "Pray make haste back, or all the boilers will have burst in Monkfields, and the men be in open revolt. I thought nothing on earth could wean you from 'business' until the clock struck six."

"But business brings me here," said Mathew, bowing distantly to Josephine, who bowed as distantly in return.

"Indeed! How's that?" said Miss Vincent, turning to Mr. Ness, as though the remark required explanation from that quarter.

"Oh, we rarely pass a day without having the benefit of Mr. Crawford's superintending eye," said Mr. Ness, with a laugh. "My men have dubbed him clerk of the works, and think he holds the appointment direct from you. Ah! ah!"

"The business that brings me here to-day, Mr. Ness, is our contract for the iron fencing and drain pipes, which are now ready for delivery," said Mr. Crawford, looking not very well pleased at Mr. Ness's wit. "If you will step into your office with me, five minutes will settle the matter."

He got off his horse as he spoke, and giving the reins to a workman standing by, adjourned to the temporary office close at hand. The ladies returned to their carriage,

and soon after they were seated, Mr. Crawford and Mr. Ness re-appeared.

"May we hope to see you to-morrow, Miss Vincent, at the match at Hailey Park?" asked Mr. Ness, with his self-sufficient air; "We expect the ladies in full force."

"What match? I know nothing of it."

"The officers at the barracks against the county eleven; amongst whom your humble servant figures. I hope you intend to patronise us."

"Oh yes; of course we shall. You have never seen a cricket match, mademoiselle? It will be such fun."

"By the way, I see you have taken your name out of the club," went on Mr. Ness, turning to Mr. Crawford, as [he mounted; "Too bad! We can't afford to lose one of our best men."

"I have no time for that sort of thing now. My cricket days are over," was the reply.

"The slave of the forge and furnace!" said Miss Vincent, with a laugh. "Good-day, Mr. Ness. Mind you keep up the

credit of the county to-morrow," and she gave a light cut to the white ponies, who started off at a sharp trot.

Miss Vincent always drove rapidly, but the ponies went so fast this afternoon, that Josephine was almost frightened. Perhaps the knowledge that Mr. Crawford was just behind accounted for their mistress's free use of the whip. Ere long they came to rising ground, and the speed had to be slackened.

"Not a bad pace that," said Mr. Crawford, as he came alongside the carriage.

"Oh, I hate to go crawling along, like old ladies taking an airing. I dislike slow things of all sorts; slow horses, slow servants, slow men. Don't you, mademoiselle?"

As she only understood the word in its literal and primal sense, Josephine looked rather puzzled, but said, "Yes, certainly."

"But there is a medium between being slow and that other more disagreeable thing, being 'fast,'" said Mr. Crawford, rather pointedly.

"Not in driving, at all events. I was just saying I would like to go four times the

pace; was I not, mademoiselle?" ("Talk French," she added, in a whisper.)

"If the ponies had wings," said Josephine, in French, as directed; "and if our chariot could not be upset, it would be charming."

"We shall be up the hill in another minute, and will race you across the common, if you like," said Miss Vincent, wickedly.

"Nonsense," said Mr. Crawford, and he drew his horse closer to the carriage, and lowering his head, said,

"I followed you to ask a question, Lilian. You are not really going yonder to-morrow?"

"Of course I am. Didn't you hear me tell Mr. Ness so?"

"Let me beg you will not."

"Why not?"

"I should not like you to go there alone."

"But my friend here will accompany me, of course."

"You know what I mean,—unaccompanied by Mrs. Vincent or myself. A cricket field

with a lot of noisy officers about is not the place for two young ladies without escort."

"Escort us then yourself."

"I cannot spare the day."

"And so we are to lose a pleasant afternoon, because—because people like to be prudes, and make themselves ridiculous," said Miss Vincent, with an air of vexation.

A cloud passed over Mr. Crawford's face. With a look of pain he said,

"It is not very much to ask of you, I think. But I am sure you will see that I am right, on reflection. Good-bye. I must turn off here. I am afraid I shall be late," and raising his hat, Mr. Crawford turned off where the roads crossed on the hill top, and galloped away in the direction of the town.

Josephine had politely turned her head aside during the conversation, which was obviously of a private nature, and so had lost the drift of what had passed.

Now the matter was more important than it might seem at first sight. On one or two previous occasions, Miss Vincent had acted in disregard of Mr. Crawford's expressed

wishes. She had attended a recent Rifle Volunteer Review, for instance, and got herself talked about by driving there alone, and having a group of gentlemen around her carriage. In short, since the engagement which now existed between them, Miss Vincent had not acted with that circumspection which Mr. Crawford considered desirable in her position. But then (as he told himself riding back) he must remember that she was young, and had always been spoiled by her parents, and had her own way with everyone about her.

Miss Vincent was unusually silent during the rest of the drive home. She was debating within herself as to how she should act on the morrow. "Should she give up the cricket match as he wished? She really did not care much about it after all. But she did not like to be treated as a child, and told what she ought to do, and what she ought not. He really claimed too much authority; he was always advising this or that; and his notions of propriety were positively prudish, as she had told him."

“And yet ‘it was not much to ask of her,’ as he had said. Yes, he was right—he was always right, (that was the provoking part of it) and she would give it up, to oblige him.” So she reflected, as she turned into her own gates, and with that resolve went to dress for dinner.

Miss Vincent would probably have carried out this resolution, but for the arrival of an unlucky epistle from Mr. Crawford that same evening, as they sat at dessert. The writer evidently concluded that the few words he had uttered that afternoon would have their intended effect, and wrote to apprise Miss Vincent that if she and Mademoiselle Arnould would come up to Monkfields on the morrow, he would like to show them the new steam-machines they were about to send out to Russia.

“Dear me! What an honour! He forgets we are engaged elsewhere,” said Miss Vincent, tossing the letter across the table to her mother.

Mrs. Vincent never opposed her daughter, being sadly deficient in that energy of which

the latter had her full share, and an invalid into the bargain. So the good lady only observed,

“What a pity, things clash so! But perhaps it’s all for the best, my dear; for I am always uneasy amongst machinery. One never knows what may burst.”

“So the good child was to be rewarded in that way, was she?” mused Miss Vincent, as she divided a peach; “I shall certainly go to Hailey Park to-morrow.”

And they went.

CHAPTER XII.

Nor only did Miss Vincent go to the Cricket Match, but she excited more than usual attention there. She never looked gayer nor handsomer, and that portion of the ladies' tent where she sat, was obviously the centre of attraction to the gentlemen. Josephine felt decidedly uneasy at the position they occupied, and did not at all admire the way in which her companion laughed and talked with the people around her. But then Josephine never knew what was permissible for young ladies according to the English social code. The standard of manners was so entirely different in her own country that it was impossible to apply it to matters here.

They returned home, towards sunset, for a late dinner ; and just as the meal was con-

cluding, Mr. Mathew Crawford was announced. He was on sufficiently intimate terms to be shown into the dining-room at once. He entered with a very obvious look of dissatisfaction upon his face.

As he was not aware why Miss Vincent had not paid the expected visit to the Foundry this afternoon, he had ridden down to inquire what had kept them away. But he had been disagreeably enlightened on the road. Just before reaching the Scarsdene gates, he had encountered a drag filled with a noisy party of men from the Cricket Match. Mr. Ness, who was driving, hailed him as he passed, with,—

“Hi! Stop a moment there, Crawford. Going to Scarsdene, eh? Oblige me, by asking what size gloves Miss Vincent wears. Lost a dozen pairs on a bet. Suppose you know we’ve won?”

“No, I did not,” was Mr. Crawford’s reply.

“Yes. Let me know about the gloves when I see you to-morrow. Ta-ta! Won’t keep you waiting. Know you are impatient

to be yonder. Lucky dog!" and with a look intended to be waggish, Mr. Ness drove on again.

"Cad!" murmured Mr. Crawford, as he rode on with knitted brows. "So Lilian went there, after all."

He said no more, but rode on faster than before, and arrived, as we said, looking highly dissatisfied. Even the unobservant Mrs. Vincent noticed his looks. But her daughter either did not or would not perceive anything unusual in his manner, and talked away with more than her ordinary animation. When the ladies rose to leave the room, Miss Vincent was the last. As he stood holding open the door, Mathew whispered to her, as she passed,—

"Will you stay a moment? I have something to say."

"Well," she inquired, turning round, "what is it?"

He closed the door, before replying. Then looking at her, he said, slowly,—

"You have disappointed me to-day—hurt me, indeed."

"How so?" she asked, for the moment misled by his seriousness. She added, the next moment, "Oh, by going to Hailey Park, I suppose? What nonsense!"

"I am sorry the reasons I gave for wishing you not to go there seemed nonsense. They appeared good reasons to me. But I fear my wishes have not the weight with you, I thought they had."

"When unreasonable, they certainly have not: and it was very unreasonable to suppose that two ladies would prefer going to inspect some horrible machinery that might explode and kill them at any moment, to spending a pleasant afternoon in Hailey Park," replied Miss Vincent, with a laugh. "Have you anything further to say?" she went on. "It looks rather odd our choosing this moment for a *tête-à-tête*."

"I have only to say that when next I make any similar request, I hope, Lilian, you will give me credit for some little share of judgment, as well as for good intentions."

"As for the good intentions, of course, that is clear enough; but I don't know about the

judgment," was the provoking reply. "We shall see."

"Don't speak so; I am talking seriously, Lilian. You scarcely know, I think, the importance of prudence in these matters. You would hardly like to hear the things that are already said about your going out alone. Young women (especially when they are without father or brothers) cannot be too careful."

"What has been said about me, pray?" asked Miss Vincent, with a sudden flash in her eyes.

"Nothing that I agree with, myself, of course; nothing but what malice too readily invents. But it shows the necessity of——"

"Oh, I won't trouble you to say more," interrupted Miss Vincent. "The opinions of the gossips of North Humberton are, and always have been, matters of perfect indifference with me. I have already heard quite enough."

"You are angry with me," said he, as she turned away. "But is it not truer kindness to speak as I have done, than allow any


mistaken consideration for your feelings to keep me silent? If I seem exacting, it is because——”

“Well, Mr. Crawford! how much longer do you mean to hold the door handle and keep me waiting? I really can’t stand any more lecturing. Will you please to let me pass?”

He looked at her earnestly; she looked back fearlessly in return. He would have been very glad if she had shown some signs of faltering at that moment; but there was nothing but contempt for his advice written on her face. He opened the door, and she swept haughtily through.

For a few moments, Mr. Crawford stood there in silence. Then he heaved a sigh and followed to the drawing-room.

It was not a comfortable evening that ensued. Josephine wondered whether it was the custom for English lovers to behave as coldly as these two did. She had always understood the contrary, and had looked for an expansiveness and cordiality that would have been deemed indecorous in her own



country, where *on fait sa cour* on quite different principles.

One reason why Mr. Crawford was so silent, was that Miss Vincent insisted on talking French all the evening with Josephine, and he could not but suspect this was done to vex him, rather than from any love of that language.

He had his suspicions, indeed, that Mademoiselle Arnould's presence there was more owing to his having discouraged the acquaintance, at the outset, than to any other cause. As to such discouragement, he was not sure that he had not been perfectly justified in it; though he was ready to own that Mademoiselle Arnould's talent for intrigue did not seem so pronounced as might have been expected in a young Frenchwoman.

Silent as Mr. Crawford was that night, it was evident to Josephine that he could talk upon occasion. The next evening, Mr. Handleigh and his sister dined at Scarsdene; and a brisk conversation, on all sorts of subjects, was kept up between the two gentlemen. Josephine listened with

pleasure ; for it recalled the old days when her father and some Paris savant sat together at their own board. Not that Mr. Handleigh was precisely a savant, but he was a man of extensive learning and of great liberality of judgment. He had profited largely by his travels abroad with his invalid wife, and his sympathies moved in a wider sphere than most English clergymen's. He was as patriotic as any man need be ; but he did not endorse the popular belief, that his own nation, language, and creed, were the best and most perfect of all possible nations, languages, and creeds, either past, present, or to come. On most points, he and Mathew Crawford thoroughly sympathised ; but the prejudices of the latter on all questions where comparisons arose between this country and other countries, he neither shared nor admired.

“ You surely do not think your remarks apply to all Frenchwomen—to Mademoiselle Arnould, for example ? ” asked Mr. Handleigh, as they sat alone, after the ladies had retired.

“ Not to her, perhaps, (though I don't

pretend to understand mademoiselle, myself) but to her countrywomen in general."

"Of whom, perhaps, your notions are formed through the medium of Messrs. Balzac, Sue, and Company?"

"Not altogether. I have travelled in France."

"And studied the native manners through such advantageous means as the restaurants and tables-d'hôte afford? Now, I have seen something of domestic life in France myself, and I am happy to say that I have met with good wives, good mothers, and good daughters; while as for the fascinating demons of fiction, I am inclined to think them more exceptional than novelists would make out."

"I am glad you think so," said Mathew, half seriously, half in joke, "or it might fare ill with both your family and mine, now my uncle's niece has come amongst us;" and they rose to join the ladies.

When they entered the drawing-room, Mademoiselle Arnould was sitting alone, with an open book before her. But she was not reading, for as Mr. Handleigh took a

seat near her, she turned round and said, suddenly,

"I want to thank you, monsieur, for your noble words to-night,—for your defence of men, who, though French, were the equal of your own greatest men in talent and in honour. My blood boils at times when I hear such names slandered. I should have spoken myself, but your vindication left nothing unsaid."

"It was a mere rendering of justice to merits which the world at large freely acknowledges, mademoiselle. But you speak with such warmth, one would think you were in the habit of hearing your countrymen frequently disparaged. I hope that is not the case?"

"Not in open words, perhaps, but very often by allusions and innuendo. Mr. Crawford is not the only Englishman who has an idea that a Frenchman is only a sort of superior ape, with a talent for cookery and scepticism."

"Crawford is one of the best fellows I know, but a thorough John Bull in his

prejudices. But you must not be too severe upon him—he is the soul of honour, and the sincerest man I ever met—uncomfortably so, I tell him.”

“He had need have some virtues,” thought Josephine, “for his disagreeable qualities are very apparent.”

He was more than usually distant with her this evening. In fact, he blamed her for the visit to Hailey Park, which had given him such offence, and felt that he should be very glad when she took her departure from the house, for he did not think her a desirable companion for Miss Vincent. He had given up the idea that she was a mere coquette and simpleton (that was quite untenable), but he regarded her as a clever person who probably hid all sorts of falsities under that air of fearless candour. That she had already made a partizan of Alice “a girl so utterly unlike her,” as he told himself, was to Mathew a proof, not of his own mistake, but of mademoiselle’s formidable talents. For only once start with a good strong prejudice against a

person, such as he had formed against Mademoiselle Arnould, and it is surprising how facts will generally fit in with your theory.

CHAPTER XIII.

PLEASANT as her visit to Scarsdene had been, Josephine was not sorry to be back again in Tyne Street. She was received there with open arms, with passionate embraces, and an eloquent expenditure of loving words.

"They do go on so! One would think, to hear 'em, she'd been gone seven years instead of seven days!" said Mrs. Boss, sarcastically, to her hand-maiden.

Those seven days had been a weary time to Madame Arnould, short as it might seem to other people; Josephine almost resolved never to leave her mother again, when she beheld how she was welcomed home. The poor lady was quite overcome, and had to lie down on the couch to recover herself.

"It has seemed ages, my darling," said madame, holding her daughter's hand in hers, and looking up at her affectionately. "The house was so desolate without thee; even Madelon lost her tongue. We should all have sunk under it, in another week. Thou must not leave us again, worldling."

And Josephine answered in her own heart that she would not. For as she looked at her mother's thin face and bright tearful eyes, she saw for the first time how much older and more worn she had got to look of late, and she half reproached herself for having left her.

Madame Arnould's health had not been benefited by her residence in England. The keen air of North Humberton, with its smoke and fog, had told unfavourably upon a constitution naturally delicate. There were moments now, when those gloomy and sometimes ludicrous forebodings, in which her mother had indulged on their first arrival, recurred to Josephine with a sense of pain. To devote herself to her mother, and do all that lay in her power to render

her happy, was Josephine's first care for the next few months.

By the time the second winter drew near, they began to feel almost at home in North Humberton, as people get to feel at home, at last, under the most strange and novel circumstances. It was at the beginning of this second winter that a new and unexpected trouble arose to disturb the peace of mind of Mademoiselle Arnould. It came about thus.

She was returning home from her lessons one afternoon, when she was stopped in Tyne Street by Miss Vincent's carriage, which drew up beside her.

"I was coming to call upon you," said Miss Vincent, putting her hand out of the window. "I want you to join our party at the Town Hall, to-night, to see this Léon Léoni, the Algerian Conjuror, I beg his pardon—Professor of Mysticism, he calls himself. Now, don't say no. You know I always have my own way, and it will do you good to have a little change. Besides, I have taken half-a-dozen tickets (Compton, the bookseller, tells me the man is very

clever, but poor), and I must have the seats filled. I shall be with you at eight," and Miss Vincent waved her hand, as the carriage drove on again.

Now Josephine had no intention of complying with this rather arbitrary invitation; but her mother urged her to do so, when she heard of it.

"This little distraction will do thee good, my child. Go and amuse thyself; I am selfish to keep thee always at my side," said madame.


Josephine doubted whether the entertainment was capable of affording her much amusement. She did not care for conjuring, and would rather have remained at home. But her mother's urgency, and the prompt arrival of Miss Vincent's carriage at eight, turned the scale.

"Do you know, I am quite interested about this man," said Miss Vincent, as they drove towards the Town Hall. "Compton tells me he speaks several languages, and has a very superior air. He is staying at the Crown Hotel, and is attended by an

African servant, who wears a turban, and is or pretends to be dumb. Quite Eastern, and magician-like, isn't it?"

They found Mr. Crawford waiting for them at the Hall, and under his escort entered the room, where Camilla and Alice were already seated amongst a party of friends. For Miss Vincent never did anything by halves, and since morning had persuaded a whole host of people to be present to-night.

Monsieur Léoni was evidently an artist. His programmes were cabalistic-looking documents. The ticket-taker wore an eastern dress. A Sphinx sat on each side of the curtain, which was black, embroidered with Arabic characters. When the curtain rose, it disclosed no gaudy "Temple of Magic," all tawdry and tinsel, but a chaste view of Egyptian ruins, with palm trees, a camel, and the moon. A tent occupied one corner of the stage, and beside it stood a sombre figure (unquestionably oriental) in turban and ear-rings—the African servant. From the recesses of this tent, after a due interval to



let the scene take effect on the spectators, emerged Léoni himself, not clad in Eastern or theatrical costume, but dressed as any other European traveller might be. He was a dark, handsome man, with a large beard, and a pair of bright black eyes. It was impossible to tell his age, for his jaded air might be the effect of travel more than of years.

Introducing himself to his audience as long a dweller in the East, he started off into a rambling sort of lecture on Magic and Mysticism, in which he lugged in Pharaoh's magicians, the Delphic oracles, Indian Jugglers, and the Rosicrucians, with more or less relevancy. He spoke with a strong foreign accent, but with considerable fluency.

"I told you he was very clever," said Miss Vincent, triumphantly, to Mr. Crawford, by whose side she sat.

"We shall see," said he, dryly, being as yet not much impressed in that way.

And now Monsieur Léoni began his tricks, which were of the usual startling character.

The tent in the corner proved to be full of all sorts of wonders, and the African, though dumb, showed himself a very wide-awake person. The spectators were fairly amused—all of them, that is, save one unhappy person.

This one person had sat with her eyes fixed on Monsieur Léoni from the moment when he emerged from his tent, with a look of intense surprise. The look had grown into one of fear and distress as he proceeded with his lecture. With a great effort she had overcome her agitation, and sat now perfectly quiet, but looking very pale, and unable to take her eyes from the man's face.

Ere long Alice noticed Josephine's looks, and asked if she were unwell. She replied, hurriedly, "Yes, let us go away." But the next moment she added, with a great effort at self-control,—

"It is only the heat of the room. I shall be better presently;" and she made sign to Alice to take no notice of her.

As yet no one else had remarked Made-



moiselle Arnould's agitation. She and Alice fortunately sat behind their friends, who occupied the front rows of seats; but upon Mathew turning round to speak to Alice, he noticed mademoiselle's pale face. He was asking for a handkerchief which the conjuror required for the performance in hand.


"We have sent two up," said he, "which have just been burnt to rags, and are promised to be returned to us whole in the middle of a bread loaf. A third is wanted to be shot off with my watch in that blunderbuss. Do oblige Mr. Mustapha."

"Oh, take Josephine's," said Alice, whisking it off her knee; "we shall know it again anywhere by the embroidered name."

Josephine made a start forward, as if to get it back; but it was too late. Mr. Crawford had already handed it to Mustapha the African servant, who was carrying it up to the platform. To have demanded it back would have looked absurd, and have only attracted attention. Josephine merely turned a little paler, and sat very still.

"Don't be alarmed, mademoiselle," laughed Mr. Crawford. "Our property will be returned safe enough."

It was first duly destroyed, however,—rammed into the blunderbuss, as far as ocular evidence went, and shot off at a casket which stood on the opposite side of the platform. On the casket being opened, of course it contained the handkerchief, which Monsieur Léoni (in order to be sure that it was the same article, and that he was not deluded by his own marvellous powers) made pretence of carefully examining. The handkerchief was all right, but the examination perhaps surprised him in some way. He glanced quickly round the audience as he gave back the handkerchief to Mustapha to restore to its owner. Mustapha bowed, and returned to the reserved seats to deliver up the borrowed article. As the man stopped in front of them, Mr. Crawford beheld Monsieur Léoni suddenly give a start. But whether it was from surprise, or because he had just overturned a little vase of mock flowers, Mr. Crawford did not know. He



turned to deliver the handkerchief to Josephine, and was struck by the singular embarrassment on her face. Her eyes immediately fell before his, and from pale she grew burning red.

It had been arranged that Mademoiselle Arnould was to return home in Miss Vincent's carriage. Mathew escorted them downstairs at the close of the entertainment. The lobby was crowded, and a little time elapsed before their carriage was called. As they passed out, Mustapha stood in the portico, with his dark eyes rolling round on the crowd, and the lamps shining on his swarthy face. As they crossed the pavement, he darted forwards, and, with an obeisance, lifted up the end of Josephine's cloak, which trailed on the ground.

"Thank you," said she, gathering up the mantle. And in that short interval (unless he was dreaming, of which he was not sure when he came to think of it afterwards,) Mr. Crawford beheld the man slip a folded paper into Josephine's hand, which she took and instantly concealed.

The next minute the ladies had entered their carriage and driven off, leaving Mr. Crawford strongly inclined to distrust the evidence of his senses.

CHAPTER XIV.

It was no delusion on Mr. Crawford's part. As Josephine drove home in Miss Vincent's carriage, she carried, concealed in her hand, a note which had been slipped into it by Monsieur Léoni's African servant. It burned her fingers as though it had been hot lead. She would have given anything to fling it from her. But she dared not until she had read it.

"I am afraid you were not much amused," said Miss Vincent, noticing her silence as they drove along.

"Oh yes, but I have a headache," replied Josephine, with burning cheeks.

She was glad to get home—glad to find that all the family, except Madelon, were in bed. She dismissed the good woman as soon as possible, saying she was very tired (she

looked so), and then as soon as Madelon had left her, she sat down before her dressing-table, and read what was contained in the paper. It consisted of only three lines, in French, couched thus :—

“I must see you to-morrow, alone. Let me know when, and where. It is of the last importance. Address Monsieur Léoni, Crown Hotel.”

Josephine sat and looked at the paper with a bewildered air. She read it and re-read it a dozen times. Once she was on the point of going down to her mother's room ; but she turned back when she got to the door, murmuring “Impossible !” She sat down again to think, with her head resting on her hands. After a few minutes, she got pen and paper, and wrote,

“I can only see you here in the presence of my mother, or Monsieur Bertin. But if you have either shame or pity, you will not dare to force yourself upon us.”

This she sealed up, and laid upon the table for Madelon to take to the Crown Hotel early the next morning. And then

she went to bed, and lay awake half the night.

Mr. Crawford, returning home to his lodgings in Tyne Street, beheld the light in Mademoiselle Arnould's window, and went on his way speculating on the little transaction he had beheld. The light was still burning when he looked out from his window an hour later. He shook his head and felt he could make nothing of it.

Now although Mr. Crawford was puzzled about this matter, he was not going to let it excite any violent prejudices or unjust suspicions in his mind, he told himself. If it had been either of his cousins whom he had caught receiving surreptitious notes from black servants, and showing signs of uneasiness in the presence of a foreign lecturer on Magic, he would naturally have inquired into matters at once. But with Mademoiselle Arnould it was another matter. In the first place, there was the enormous difference of race, education, &c.—facts ever present to his mind: in the second, he had no right to interfere in mademoiselle's private affairs.

Besides, after all, he might have been deceived. The transaction had taken place under the flickering light of the lamps in the portico; the paper might have been merely a programme, the furtive air of the African only the manner natural to one of his race. Better give mademoiselle the benefit of the doubt, for really her conduct of late had been all that the strictest propriety could require.

Thus reasoned Mathew Crawford, as he walked to his office next morning and beheld Mademoiselle Arnould before him, on her way to her morning lessons at the Parsonage in St. Jude's. But he had not proceeded many paces further, when he saw Monsieur Léoni on the other side of the street, apparently observing and following her. Mr. Crawford hesitated a moment, and then, instead of turning off into Monk-fields, as usual, followed in the same direction.

Mademoiselle Arnould walked fast, and soon reached St. Jude's Churchyard. She crossed it, and the next minute entered Mr.

Handleigh's door. Whether she knew or not that she was followed, she had never looked back, or given any sign to the person behind her. As mademoiselle entered the parsonage, Monsieur Léoni turned on his heel so suddenly, that he almost ran upon Mr. Crawford, who was just behind him. The man evidently recognised him again, and stared as though he had a suspicion he was dogging his steps. But Mr. Crawford was already ashamed of the part he was playing, and reddening violently, walked on a little further, and took the nearest cut back to the foundry.

That same morning, as Josephine was engaged with her pupil, finding in work the best refuge from the anxieties that filled her mind, there came a tap at the library door, and a servant entered.

"There is somebody in the hall wishes to speak to you, mamzel."

"To me? Is it not Miss Handleigh you mean?" asked Josephine, surprised that any one should visit her there.

"No, it was your name he mentioned,

mamzel, being a foreign gentleman, to judge by looks and language."

Josephine rose hastily from her seat.

"I cannot see him," she said hurriedly. "I am engaged, and——" She stopped and then added, after a moment's reflection, "Stay; show him in here, if you please," and, turning to her pupil, she bade her leave the room for a few minutes, as she wished to speak to the visitor in private.

She stood awaiting him, with a pale face, and beating heart. But she drew herself up as he entered, and returned his salute coldly, in the presence of the servant. As soon as the door was closed, she said in French,

"This is an intrusion. I told you I would only see you in the presence of my family. Why do you come here?"

Monsieur Léoni stared round the room, and then replied, with an air of amazement, either assumed or real,

"I am altogether confused — surprised. Certainly, in the presence of your family, if you desire it, Josephine. A charming room,

this, for a tête-à-tête, but I thought you had resolved not to grant me one. I suppose madame is still at her toilette. Well, I can wait her leisure—the better that you have such an excellent choice of easy chairs;” and he drew one near him, and sat down as he spoke.

“You are trifling,” said Josephine, an angry flush overspreading her cheeks. “Are you not aware that my family do not live here? This house is a clergyman’s, and I am governess here.”

“Ah, that makes a difference!” said the man, rising from his seat. “I imagined, when I had the good fortune to observe you in the street, that I had seen you enter your own dwelling. So this is a clergyman’s house, is it? Ah, they understand comfort—these English curés, it appears!”

Josephine could not tell from this manner (for it was a mixture of bravado and anxiety) whether or not the speaker had really been ignorant that he was intruding in a stranger’s house.

“An excellent library, I see,” he con-

tinued, with a nervous air, inspecting the book-cases. "Our own countrymen too, in abundance. Pascal and Rousseau, side by side, with Guizot in a fine suit, and Comte in philosophic brown. A man of liberal views, your English vicar, I should say."

"Will you please to tell me what brings you here?" said Josephine impatiently,

He turned round, and looking steadily at Josephine, said,

"You think me flippant, Josephine, and are amazed at my audacity in showing myself before you. But men often hide aching hearts under flippant airs, and necessity knows not the word audacity. You wonder how I found you here—how I come to be in England at all, and in the character of a travelling lecturer. If I used the language of good folks, I should say Providence led me here; for I never needed friends more than at this moment."

"You count upon us, then, to stand your friends? Surely you have a short memory," said Mademoiselle Arnould, bitterly.

"A long and tenacious one, on the contrary

—a memory that holds stored up a thousand acts of kindness at the hands of two women, who yet appear to me the noblest of their sex. Ay, Josephine, such do your mother and you still seem to me, in spite of all that has passed.”

“Your memory then, if so good, recalls also, without doubt, the sorrows you caused those women?—the disgrace you brought upon an honourable family, and the ingratitude with which you repaid the generosity of my father?”

Mademoiselle Arnould’s eyes flashed as she uttered her father’s name.

“Spare your reproaches,” replied the man, whose face underwent a change, that even his talent for acting could not hide. “If there be one name that has power to awake remorse here,” striking his breast as he spoke, “it is that of Gustave Arnould. I was at Alexandria when I first heard of his death—through a notice in a scientific journal, fallen into my hands by chance. Though I stood in the midst of a herd of Arab porters, on a crowded quay, I sat

down on a block of stone, and wept like a child—ay, wept till those rough children of the desert were even moved at the sight of my grief.”

“Let us have no sentimentality, I entreat,” said Josephine coldly. “Let me know what you want with me, as concisely as possible. My time here is not my own.”

Recalled to the present by this unsympathetic tone, the person styling himself Léoni revealed the object of his visit. Josephine heard him with mingled sorrow and disdain.

“Oh, Léon, how you have fallen, ere you would stoop to this!” said she, looking at him with tears rising in her eyes. “I refuse—of course I refuse.”

He made some further appeal.

“Do you think, then, our obligations to Mr. Crawford are not already great enough?” she answered. “Do you think I have no shame—no sense of honour, that you ask me to make this request of him?”

“I think, on the contrary, that you have

the nicest sense of honour that woman was ever blessed with. But I also think that, like all people who live in ease and affluence, you cannot comprehend what is meant by that hard word 'poverty.'"

"Live in ease and affluence? For shame! We are dependent on the bounty of a relative, and that relative a stranger to us eighteen months ago."

"But a relative of colossal fortune—a man who turns all he touches into gold. I have heard somewhat of this Monsieur Crawford and his prodigious wealth since I arrived here."

He went on urging his request even more vehemently than before; but Josephine turned a deaf ear to his appeals. She would not even be touched by his adroit attempts to work upon her feelings. She turned very pale as he spoke of a happier past; and again the tears rose in her eyes.

"This is cruel, ungenerous," she murmured, feeling herself more vulnerable on that side than elsewhere; for old scenes of her life were present, in which the man

before her had played a prominent part. But she did not falter or unsay what she had said.

He tried another tack; and now at last her resolution began to waver.

"No, no; not that," she said, suddenly; "I will not allow him to be approached. You may sooner take every penny I have."

After some further conversation, during which the man wept, and sighed, and cursed his existence, Josephine said, after a little reflection,

"Name the smallest sum that will content you."

He named it.

"You shall have it to-morrow if possible."

"It must be to-night."

She hesitated a moment.

"Well, then, to-night, if you will promise to leave this town to-morrow. I would not have my mother or grandfather know of your presence here, if it can be avoided."

In a few more words the place and time of meeting were named, and then Josephine

drew the interview to a close, and rang for the servant to show the visitor out.

She stood and watched him across the little garden that separated the vicarage from the street, and then, as the gate closed behind him, she sank down on her chair, and hid her face in her hands. She was roused by the sound of footsteps outside the window, and looking up beheld Mr. Handleigh coming up the garden path, not with eyes cast down in thought, after his wont, but with his gaze fixed intently on the library windows.

"He must have seen her visitor quitting the house," was the thought that instantly flashed through Josephine's mind.

She seemed greatly agitated for a moment. But the next minute a sudden resolution was formed in her mind, and she rose immediately to put it into execution.

CHAPTER XV.

WHEN Mr. Mathew Crawford encountered Monsieur Léoni that morning near St. Jude's Church, he was, as we have said, already ashamed of his errand. To play the part of a spy was certainly undignified, and he felt annoyed with himself, as he walked back to the foundry. But the day's work soon caused him to forget his annoyance; and the whole affair would probably have made no lasting impression upon him, but for a further event which gave to it a new and unpleasant significance.

He was crossing St. John's market, that evening, on his way to a parish meeting in St. Jude's, when he beheld before him Madame Arnould's servant—easily recognisable from her costume—standing on the steps at the corner of the market. There

was nothing very remarkable in this ; but a few yards further on—under the columns on which the old market house rested—he saw two figures standing together in the shade. Without the clue to their identity which Madelon's presence afforded, he would easily have recognised Mademoiselle Arnould and Monsieur Léoni. He stood for a moment astounded at the sight. Ere he had traversed the whole length of the market, they had separated, and Mademoiselle Arnould was hastening with Madelon down the steps that led into the street.

Mr. Crawford went on his way, feeling surprised and uneasy at what he had just seen.

He had lately begun to suspect that his old prejudices against Mademoiselle Arnould were somewhat exaggerated after all. But, lo ! in one moment they had returned with increased force. Probably Mr. Crawford had never shown himself so inattentive to business at a public meeting, as he did this evening.

He could not forget the matter as he walked home again. Who was this Mon-

sieur Léoni? How did he come to have such influence over Mademoiselle Arnould as to induce her to meet him clandestinely? He had never heard that she had any male relatives who could rightly claim such intimacy as was here pointed at.

For some days he was puzzled to know whether he ought not to name the matter to his family; but it would perhaps look like animosity on his part if he did: his uncle had often twitted him with his prejudices against Josephine. Besides, whatever he himself might think of her conduct, it was possible that it might admit of an innocent interpretation after all; and then the idea of exciting suspicions (which might be groundless) in other people's minds was of course highly distasteful.

So, after much pondering he resolved to leave matters alone, though his faith in mademoiselle was shaken, and just at a time when he was beginning to reconstruct his opinion of her character.

For it had become impossible in the course of a twelvemonth's acquaintance

(unless influenced by actual malice, of which Mathew Crawford was of course guiltless) to ignore some very palpable and commendable virtues in Mademoiselle Arnould—such, for instance, as her industry, her affection for her mother, and her self-reliance. But what now was he to think of this evidently exceptional character?

Meanwhile Mademoiselle Arnould was utterly unconscious that she was the subject of these disagreeable speculations and surmises. But she had enough to trouble her just now, without the anxieties arising from the unwelcome visit of the stranger, whose appearance in North Humberton had caused her such disquiet.

Her mother had fallen ill on the first approach of cold weather, and was not rallying again as she had done before. A doctor had been called in, who shook his head and gave Josephine small comfort. Madame Arnould was “very delicate—required great care—the English climate was probably unsuitable.” Too evident, all this, alas!

The winter had set in with unusual severity this year. A long frost with intermittent snow-storms had given a bleaker aspect than usual to the cold northern hills that lay around North Humberton. Even strong persons were suffering from the rigour of the season.


Mrs. Vincent was ill; her doctors talked of chronic bronchitis, and urged removal to a milder climate. A great medical authority from London advised "Egypt" or "Algiers," just as ordinary people would advise a neighbouring watering-place; but as Mrs. Vincent was convinced they would be murdered by desert robbers, or sold into slavery, or at least catch the plague if they set foot in Africa, and as her daughter had no "unrealized ideals" on the subject of the Pyramids or sunsets on the Nile, it was decided to pay a visit to Hastings instead.

Mrs. Crawford, who had found her way much more easily to the sick room at Scarsdene than to the one in Tyne Street, strongly favoured the latter scheme, on the ground that "poor Mathew must be considered a

little, you know ; ” and she drew a moving picture of what he would suffer if they were not at some place where he could easily get to see them, chiding her dear Lilian playfully for her cruelty in suggesting Mentone or Nice. But Mrs. Crawford in her zeal always over-acted her part ; and Lilian only turned away with a curled lip. She knew Mr. Crawford better, she told herself, than to feel much anxiety about his “ sufferings ” at her absence.

This view of things might be a little harsh perhaps, but it must reluctantly be confessed that matters between Mr. Crawford and his lady-love were not so satisfactory as their friends could have desired. That old project of “ getting to know each other,” though it had resulted in a positive engagement, had not produced all the fruits looked for—by Mathew Crawford at least.

There was a vague feeling of disappointment in Miss Vincent growing upon him, as time went on—a conviction that his attempts to “ mould her character ” were useless—that, indeed, the character he sought to mould was



already as much formed and of as firm a temper as his own. He was angry at this sense of disappointment, and often reminded himself that it was his duty to make every allowance for the wilfulness and whims of an only and much indulged daughter.

But this wilfulness often took a form peculiarly annoying to a man like Mr. Crawford. Miss Vincent would insist on treating his advice and remonstrances as unnecessary and "old womanish,"—laughed at him in fact, and that, sometimes, in the presence of others. It must be owned (as some little extenuation of her conduct) that the advice was sometimes ill-judged, and the remonstrances frequently showed a singular want of fact and knowledge of character.

Miss Vincent could not endure to be schooled, as she said. It roused a spirit of rebellion at once. If she cared to dance three times with the same gentleman at a ball, she would, whether Mr. Crawford approved or not. If she liked to read the last sensation novel, she would do so,

whether Mr. Crawford had placed it on his *Index Expurgatorius*, or not. She admired all the heroes and heroines he considered objectionable, and liked all the sentiments he decried. And in all this there was something of natural taste and inclination, but more perhaps of opposition to a too loudly proclaimed tone of authority.

Matters stood thus between them, when the time arrived for Mrs. Vincent's departure for St. Leonard's, for by dint of various little stratagems, and by working upon the fears and prejudices of the mother, Mrs. Crawford had gained her way. When the last evening came, and Mathew and Miss Vincent sat alone together in the drawing-room at Scarsdene, the interview was not so tender or so harmonious as could have been expected between lovers on the eve of a separation. Mathew had looked for some little signs of sadness on Lilian's part—had hoped that at least she would show a willingness to listen to his parting advice. But, instead of this she was in high spirits, and disinclined to any serious conversation.

"I am glad the idea of St. Leonard's seems less objectionable to you than it did. I scarcely expected to find you so lively to-night," said Mathew at length, with an air of pique.

"It certainly does seem less objectionable. You won't find me grown damp and melancholy with sitting 'by the sad sea-waves,' without anything to do but 'listen to their flow,' I assure you. I mean to get as much amusement as I can; and really the prospect is not so bad just now."

"Indeed? Pray in what respect has it changed?"

"Oh, didn't you know?" returned Miss Vincent, looking at him with the air of one about to communicate a pleasant surprise. "How stupid of me! I forgot to tell you that the Bloxhams go up to town next week, for the parliamentary season, and they have invited me to spend as much time as possible with them, in Eaton Square. As I find I can run up from St. Leonard's in about two hours, I shall, of course, often be with them."

"Oh, indeed!"

There was a brief silence; and then Mathew added,—

"And your mother? Mrs. Vincent surely is not thinking of paying these visits?"

"Oh, of course not. She will stay quietly at home with Miss Dodd, who is the best nurse in the world. Oh, don't be alarmed about me," she interrupted, as he was about to speak. "Mrs. Bloxham will chaperone me with her own girls; and so it will all be very pleasant and proper, you see."

She looked at him a little mockingly—a little defiantly, as she spoke.

"Of course I am reckoning immensely on the Opera and all the rest," she went on quickly. "Few girls in my position have seen so little. Papa never went to London except on business, and mamma only to see her doctor; I really know nothing of the delightful things one is always reading about, and shall enjoy everything with the freshness of a school-girl."

Mathew looked at her to see if she were in earnest. There was no doubt of it.

"I hope you will recollect," he began ;
"that is, I think I have a right to——"

"To protest, eh?" laughed Lilian. "Of course. Protest away, by all means."

"No—to be considered, I would have said, had you allowed me to finish."

"Of course you shall. You shall always hear what I wear, where I go, whom I dance with, and as many of the compliments paid me as my modesty will allow me to repeat. Won't that do?"

She would not approach the matter seriously for a moment. She rattled on laughingly and lightly, as though resolved to disarm him by her gaiety. But he would not respond to her mood, and sought in vain to arouse a more serious and befitting spirit. She paid far more attention to her maid, who kept coming in to receive her orders about the contents of the thirteen trunks which Miss Vincent professed to have upon her mind. She called back the maid to bring down a splendid ball dress for Mr. Crawford to look at. As Lilian stood with the dress spread out before her, pointing to the "lovely

lace," and the "delicious trimmings," with an air of well-acted admiration, Mr. Crawford's brows darkened.

"Then you are really thinking of going to balls?" he asked, as soon as the servant had withdrawn.

"Well, we don't usually wear this style of thing for dinners or drives. This will be for Mrs. Bloxham's first dance, I suppose. You don't say how you like it?"

"Like it? I am in no mood for trifling, Lilian. Either you are trifling, or intentionally trying to hurt my feelings."

"Your feelings? How suddenly sensitive you have grown!"

Then followed a few earnest, almost sharp words from Mr. Crawford, for he was angry, and spoke warmly. Miss Vincent was sarcastic, and not inclined to permit the tone. No doubt she was in the wrong, and she knew it. But Mrs. Crawford had spent an hour with her "dear Lilian" that morning, advising and warning her as to her future conduct; and, in the course of the interview, Mrs. C. had made most injudicious use of her

nephew's name. Miss Vincent resented the advice that had been given her, but more still the quarter from which it came.

"If Mr. Crawford wanted to lecture me, why did he not do it himself, instead of setting on his aunt?"—was her indignant remonstrance to her mother, as Mrs. Crawford's carriage had disappeared down the drive. So, her tone to-night was really heartless, and Mr. Crawford felt more pained and aggrieved by her behaviour, than he had ever done before.

They parted coldly, with some implied arrangement as to meeting at the Railway Station on the morrow. Ere Mr. Crawford had left the house, he heard Lilian, at the piano, already singing, "Oh, the heart is a free and a fetterless thing," as runs the song, with provoking spirit.

When he arrived at the Station the next morning to see them off, Mrs. Vincent and her party were already on the platform. Two maids, a footman, and Miss Dodd, the companion, formed Mrs. Vincent's suite.

"Oh, thank you, we won't trouble you; it

is all very nicely arranged," said Miss Vincent, in reply to Mr. Crawford's offers of assistance. "Our friend here has spoken to the guard and got us a middle compartment."

The friend was Mr. Walter Ness, who chanced to be going up to London on business, and was making himself very busy in the ladies' service. In return for his civilities he got, what of course he expected, a seat in the same carriage with them.

Mathew had hoped to have a few last words with Lilian, for he felt heart-sick after the interview of last night, and wanted to part on better terms; but Mr. Ness's presence rendered any such last words impossible.

Miss Vincent showed no sign of comprehending his feelings; but talked and laughed away in a way that was very irritating. So Mr. Crawford gave his arm to her mother, to conduct her to the carriage, and then, when they were all seated, stood by the window, looking very gloomy and obviously annoyed.

The whistle blew: Mrs. Vincent again

shook hands and repeated her injunctions to Mathew to come and see them very soon ; Miss Vincent bade him a cheerful "good-bye," and Mr. Ness gave him a jaunty nod. Then the train moved slowly out of the Station ; and the last sight Mr. Crawford caught of the occupants of the middle compartment revealed Miss Vincent and Mr. Ness laughing over the new number of *Punch*, which the gentleman had politely procured her.

She had not said a kind word—not even given him a kind look. Mr. Crawford walked back to Monkfields, to meditate, in the intervals of the day's business, on the behaviour of his future wife on this their first parting, with anything but bright forebodings.



CHAPTER XVI.

FOR many days to come, the painful impression produced on Mr. Crawford's mind by Miss Vincent's recent behaviour did not wear off. He began to doubt whether she really loved him at all. If she did, her love was certainly not of the kind he had always hoped to secure in a wife. He could understand how a girl of high spirit, accustomed to indulgence and flattery, should at times chafe against the rebukes and admonitions of a lover who told her of her faults, and always spoke his mind ; but he could not understand that she should delight to thwart and vex him, and consistently set her will in opposition to his own.

Perhaps Miss Vincent might have found it difficult to explain her conduct herself.

It was in her power, of course, to break off the engagement. She stood in no dread of parents, or guardians, or even of public opinion. The secret of her conduct lay, perhaps, in the fact that she did not feel herself to be thoroughly and heartily loved, and that, furthermore, she suspected Mr. Crawford of desiring to elevate her character to some ideal standard existing in his own mind, to which she did not correspond, and which she felt herself incapable of ever attaining. Hence her waywardness, her secret dissatisfaction with herself, her ostentatious defiance of his authority.

Even now, when they were separated from each other, and might be supposed to be under the influence of those tenderer thoughts that absence creates, Miss Vincent did not find the satisfaction in their correspondence she had always looked for in a lover's letters. The first time he wrote, Mr. Crawford made allusion to her behaviour at parting. It was intended for a gentle, dignified remonstrance; Lilian thought it a cold and ungracious reproof,

implying a moral superiority on the writer's part, which affronted her. She ignored the subject in her reply, and only wrote about the pleasant journey they had made, and how agreeably she was surprised in St. Leonard's, which was "so bright and sunny, and utterly unlike North Humberton."

Mr. Crawford bit his lip as he read the cheerful epistle, and determined that henceforth he would leave alone the guiding and admonitory rôles. With that resolve, his next letters breathed no reproach, but were as pleasant and natural as they could be, considering they did not fairly reflect his own feelings.

Unsatisfactory as was this state of things, Mr. Crawford did not allow it to prey upon him outwardly; nor did it interfere with his attention to business. Whatever he might be suffering, he kept it all to himself. The only one amongst his family who at all suspected his state of mind was his cousin Alice, who had her suspicions that it was not merely Lilian's absence that made her cousin so grave and disinclined for society

just now, though her mother was always citing his behaviour as a proof of his lover-like devotion.

"You never come to see us, Mathew, now-a-days," said Alice, one morning as she encountered her cousin in Tyne Street. "How is it?"

"I am so much engaged," was the reply.

"Papa says you give more time in Monk-fields than is necessary. Now come away early to-night, and escort me home from Madame Arnould's."

"You still continue your French studies, then?"

"Of course, and I can talk away with Madame Arnould quite easily now. I shall tell them you are coming to pay your respects this evening."

"You are very kind to dispose of my time in this way," said her cousin, smiling.

"And you are very *unkind*, living in the same street, and never going near them. It would be an act of charity to look in sometimes upon Monsieur Bertin, poor old gentleman."

Mathew's conscience did a little reproach him for having been neglectful in this quarter. But he made a reply that not a little surprised his cousin.

"Are you quite sure, Alice," said he, looking at her gravely, "that you really know your friend Mademoiselle Arnould after all?"

"Know her? Well I think I ought to do, by this time. Why, Mathew, you surely are not harping on that old theme. How absurd! Your suspicions have been disproved over and over again, I should have thought."

Alice turned quite red in her vexation.

"Then you have seen no reason for changing your good opinion of Mademoiselle Arnould? No little tortuosities or de — deceptions?" added Mathew, with some confusion of manner.

"Deceptions? Of course not. How can you ask such a question?"

"Don't be angry. I would much rather think well of your friend than not, I can assure you."

"But I *am* angry," said Alice, really

vexed at this serious tone. "I declare this amounts to intolerance and—and persecution. I withdraw my invitation to you for to-night. I shall tell them at home to send for me. I won't have you come near my friends," and Alice walked off in high displeasure.

"A pleasant part for a man to be always playing, certainly—that of detractor of a young lady against whom he is supposed to have a violent and quite unreasonable prejudice!" reflected Mathew, as he went on his way.

But for all Alice's indignation, he could not help recollecting what he had seen with his own eyes, nor could he avoid the unfavourable conclusions that had been forced upon him.

His cousin's indignation, however, did not prevent him going that night to Madame Arnould's—perhaps her prohibition rather acted the other way. He would go and see for himself what the domestic life of these French people was like.

There was nothing very startling, cer-

tainly, in the aspect of things, when he entered Madame Arnould's room that evening.

The two young ladies were seated at their French lesson; the grandfather, in spectacles, was reading his newspaper, and Madame Arnould was lying on her sofa, knitting. A perfectly natural, home-like picture—doing no outrage to British preconceptions of domestic life. The presence of Madelon, indeed, who sat mending linen at a side table, imparted a sort of old-fashioned homely air to the scene, not at all expected by Mr. Crawford.

The unlooked-for guest was courteously received, though with a little extra formality; for he was more a stranger there than any other member of the Crawford family. Indeed, Madame Arnould had long since made up her mind that "Monsieur Mathieu" was stiff and cold, and that he had a *Britannique* aversion to foreigners, so she greeted him with the smallest bow she knew how to accord.

At first, matters halted a little, through

lingual difficulties; but ere long the conversation settled down into French, the only really available language for all present.

When he had got over his first shyness, and conquered that *amour propre*, which often keeps the true Briton silent when his inclination is to talk, Mathew got on very fairly. His accent was rather laughable, perhaps, to native ears; but even Madelon knew better than to smile at it. Monsieur Bertin evidently greatly enjoyed talking with their visitor.

"I see so few people who speak my language, Monsieur Mathieu, that you find me very garrulous, I fear," said the old gentleman, with a touching sort of apologetic air.

Mathew could not help regretting that he had not afforded this easy pleasure to the old man before, and bethought himself of Alice's words.

That young lady sat at the table with Josephine, busy with her books; but casting from time to time a haughty little glance at

Mathew, that seemed to say "I wonder you dare show yourself here!"

She did not unbend towards him in the least, until he had proved by a good hour's hard talk in French, with Monsieur Bertin, that he was entitled to a little consideration. At the end of that time, she said,

"Mathew, I am going to stay supper, and I have asked madame if you may be included."

With that, the two young ladies disappeared, and Madelon with them—all three laughing and whispering in a way that betrayed some secret in hand.

The secret was the preparation of an impromptu supper,—a matter of greater difficulty than might appear. For Mrs. Boss had to be propitiated into allowing her kitchen to be invaded, and free use of saucepans and frying-pans granted to Madelon.

Alice undertook to gain over Mrs. Boss, and the result was a triumphant success.

A delicious dish of cutlets, an artistic omelette, and potatoes fried to perfection,

made their appearance at nine o'clock. Mademoiselle dressed the salad, and Madelon waited on them with a beaming face, and laughed with delight at Mr. Crawford's praises of her cooking.

Everybody seemed agreeably surprised at the success of an evening which had begun rather coldly; and Monsieur Bertin, inspired with a sudden access of Gallic gaiety, brought out one of three sacred bottles of burgundy (relics of the cellar at Fontainebleau) which he had reserved for great festivities.

The hospitality and the simple gaiety of his hosts, pleased Mathew not a little. Even poor Madame Arnould smiled and chirped, and ate her cutlets with a relish, under the influence of the burgundy and the bright faces about her. "It was long since she had spent such a gay evening," she said, as she bade her guests good-bye. "She thanked Monsieur Mathieu greatly for his agreeable society, and hoped ere long to see him again."

Monsieur reddened a little under the

thanks, and knew that at least one pair of eyes in the room was looking on satirically at the moment. But whether he merited the thanks or not, it is certain that he had tried to make himself agreeable to his entertainers, and had not found the effort so distasteful as he could have expected.

"I would give a good deal to know the bottom of mademoiselle's mystery," he pondered, as he sat by his hearth that night. "One would say she knew her duty as a daughter, at any rate."

CHAPTER XVII.

THE visit to Madame Arnould's that evening was the forerunner of many other similar visits during the ensuing weeks. How it came to pass, Mathew Crawford hardly knew; but he found himself, ere long, in the habit of looking in upon his neighbours in Tyne Street almost every evening when the French lesson was on hand. Commenced at first, from a sense of the justice of Alice's reproaches, and a desire to make amends for his late neglect, these visits were at length continued for their own sake. Besides, too, it was almost a laudable object to study the character of this enigmatical young Frenchwoman, and so clear up, if possible, the suspicions which hung about her.

But an insight into his, and other people's

state of mind, may best be discovered by a glance at certain letters that passed through the North Humberton post-office about this time.

We take this first, from Josephine Arnould to her old friend, the Protestant pastor at Nîmes.

LETTER I (translated).

" Tyne Street,

" North Humberton.

" DEAR MONSIEUR AUBLAIS,

" If you knew what good your letters do me! Thanks—a thousand times for the consolatory, hopeful words your last contains. You tell me I have acted rightly, and I am satisfied. It was a great shock to me to meet again, and to meet as we did! Oh, my good friend, surely it is the saddest of all things to feel not only one's love, but one's respect withdrawn where once both seemed firmly rooted! He is altered; so altered that I hardly knew him the first few moments, that terrible evening.

" More than ever do I rejoice that my

mother has been kept in ignorance of this matter. She has been seriously ill again, and I tremble when I think of the effect the discovery might have had upon her health. Alas ! Monsieur, your amiable prophecies are slow to realize themselves. My dear mother grows obviously weaker. I fear you would hardly know your old friend, who has lost all the pretty colour you used to compliment her upon in the old days, and got a worn and weary look, which rends one's heart to see.

“ But I want not to distress you ; to tell you rather of the consolations we enjoy in the midst of our troubles ; of the good, kind friends we have about us. Amongst these, our dear Alice still stands first ; but we receive frequent, I may say, daily acts of kindness from Mr. Handleigh and his sister. Now it is a soup, or dainty dish for our invalid ; now a bouquet of hot-house flowers, a French book, or a newspaper. We have also met with attentions from a quite unexpected quarter. Mr. Mathew Crawford (of whose first visit I told you) has become quite a good neighbour, and rarely misses one of

our French lessons. I have begun to think better of him since I found that he has learned piquet (though he dislikes cards) on purpose to play with grandpapa. But he is an odd man, and so extremely English, that I fear he will always remain antipathetic to a person of my patriotic temperament. I have a queer feeling, at times, that he is studying us, and if ever I show myself an ardent lover of all things French, it is in his presence. His unassuming acts of kindness, however, deserve our gratitude, and I must give him the credit of being truthful, even to rudeness. After all, perhaps, this is preferable to the inane insincerity (called politeness) which it is too usual, in French society, to adopt towards women, and which I have often felt to be more an insult to our understanding than a compliment to our charms.

"We all meet occasionally at Mr. Handleigh's, where our winter evenings are enlivened by fireside games, at which our host is great. It quite upsets one's old notions of English stiffness and decorum, to see the hearty way in which grown-up men and

women enter into these amusements. Our *salon* at home never rang with heartier laughter than I have heard here. We had a charade the other night, which was really brilliant, and Camilla, as Marie Stuart, looked lovely enough to win the heart of any jailer. I am sure she fancied—but no, I will not say it—the more so that I really regret the little love there is between us. What I have done to merit the growing coldness shown me by herself and her stepmother, I cannot tell. Mrs. Crawford delicately insinuated that the humble part of a Sister of Charity, which fell to my lot in the charade, was chosen by coquetry to show off my complexion. I will never play in her presence again—never!

“But I am going to be angry, and draw down upon myself a rebuke; and I want your next letter to be as sweet and soothing as the last. Your account of your Thursday classes for religious instruction to the young girls, brings back to me so many memories! What happy, peaceful days those seem to me now! Will these days seem so when distance has softened down the cares and

sorrows of the present? Adieu, dear Monsieur.
We all embrace you heartily.

“JOSEPHINE.”

LETTER II.


“*St. Leonard's.*”

“MY DEAR MR. MATHEW,

“(I had nearly written ‘Mathew,’ as you see; but on appealing to Miss Dodds—an authority on such points—I find she considers the prefix more proper, and I know you like propriety.)

“We are all delighted with your letters. The quantity of nice news you contrive to send us does you great credit. I had no idea you had such talents as a *raconteur*, and fear my own letters will suffer by contrast. I am so glad to hear the iron-trade is a little brisker. I forget whether ‘pigs’ are firm or not; but I have an impression that ‘bars’ are active, and ‘sheets’ (am I right?) are looking up. Could I desire more gratifying intelligence?

“You hope we are not in danger of being dull here. Thank you; but it is really most




unlikely. Mamma never finds time hang heavily on her hands when within reach of a circulating library, and we have three or four close at hand. Miss Dodd and she cry away to their hearts' content over a new heroine nearly every night. For myself, I have got Buttercup and Billy here; (they travelled without hurt:—I felt so sorry for them, shut up in that horrible horse-box, the darlings!) and we are exploring the country far and near, and finding out the jolliest drives. Dull! Why, I have been to London for two days (as I told you I should), and danced one night at a ball in Portman Square, and the next in Hyde Park Gardens. I went up alone with my maid; but returned with Edith Constable and her brother, Captain Constable, who has not yet got over his wounds in the Kaffir War, and is wintering here with his mother and sisters. They are very jolly girls, though, I dare say, you would consider them *un peu vite*, as they *don't* say across the Channel.

“You can't think what a swell place the Bloxhams have got in town. I don't know

to whose taste it is all due (the upholsterer's, perhaps); but it is quite lavish, and reminds one of Aladdin's palace, says Captain Constable, especially as it seems to have sprung up in little more than a night. Julia Bloxham looked uncommonly well, and seems likely to attract great attention, (what a pity their poor mother is quite destitute of *h's*, she is a good soul, and can't help looking like her own cook), and she talked French—Julia, not her mamma—with a foreign Marquis de — something, in a way that did great credit to my friend, Mademoiselle Arnould.

“Speaking of her, I am delighted to hear that you have so far overcome your prejudices as to spend an evening occasionally with those obnoxious French people. I congratulate you on your courage, and confess I don't perceive any deterioration in your moral tone so far.

“Captain Constable has just come in to ask me to join them in a ride to Battle Abbey. I must be off at once to dress. Mamma sends her love to your aunt and



cousins, and desires her best regards to yourself.

“Believe me, dear Mr. Mathew,

“Yours affectionately,

“LILIAN VINCENT.”

“I re-open my letter to tell you of a curious little circumstance. On arriving at Battle, we dismounted to look over the ruins. We were on the terrace, amongst other people, (talking English history, of course,) when the wind, which was very high, blew off my hat. Captain Constable set off in pursuit. I was not going to run after it myself, and in a riding habit of all things, but he was outstripped by a foreign-looking gentleman, who caught the hat and returned it to me with a polite bow. ‘Léon Léoni of all persons!’ exclaimed I, as soon as he was out of hearing. ‘You surely don’t know that man?’ said Captain Constable, who had been staring at him from the moment he picked up the hat. ‘Yes, I do,’ said I; ‘Why shouldn’t I?’ ‘Oh, only that I remember him as rather a notorious

person at Homburg two or three years back.' 'In what way notorious?' I asked. 'Well, he had just returned from the East, dressed extravagantly, had a black servant, and played high. He broke the bank on one occasion; I never saw such a run of luck,' said Captain C. 'He also distinguished himself by another breakage that was much talked of—a lady's heart, but that possibly was reparable, as she was a Parisian leader of fashion.' So, you see, my romance of the distressed gentleman was not without some foundation after all, angry as it made you, when I expressed my conviction that he was not a common conjuror."

LETTER III.

*"The Iron Works, Monkfields,
North Humberton.*

"MY DEAR LILIAN,

"When you say, in your last, that you 'suspect I am not satisfied with your letters, for I never find anything to praise in them,' you, in a measure, divine my feelings, though you do me injustice by the

way in which you put it. I admire in them what I have always admired in you—candour, namely, and a frank expression of your feelings, with a scorn of all pretended ones. But can I be expected to admire your studied disregard for my wishes? It does not argue any over-sensitiveness, I should think, on the part of a man in my position, if he feel hurt, at what I do think is most inconsiderate behaviour on yours.

“I did not intend alluding to this painful subject again, (Heaven knows I do not seek to find fault!) but your last letter compels me. You tell me you are going to a fancy-dress ball with your friends the Constables. I ask you, as a favour, to forego the pleasure. ‘Why?’ you will say. Well then, I will tell you plainly. Because I do not care that you should appear so often in public under Captain Constable’s escort, or, indeed, under any other escort than my own. I know nothing of Captain C., except from the little I saw of him when I was with you at St. Leonard’s, and that little impressed me in his favour. But, of course, as you

will understand, my objections are on general, not personal grounds.

"This is not too great a sacrifice, I hope, to ask of you? It is one that I think both your good sense and good feeling will approve, on a little consideration.

"I feel sorry that you should not wear the beautiful dress you describe to me; but I think when the day comes when you wear a certain other beautiful dress, in which you are sure to look well in my eyes, the thought of this pleasure renounced for my sake, will be very pleasant to both of us.

"It is foreign post-day, and my clerk is looking black as thunder at the prospect of 'over-hours' to-night. Good-bye, dear Lilian. My kind regards to your mother. Believe me,

"Affectionately yours,

"MATHEW CRAWFORD."

LETTER IV.

"*St. Leonard's.*

"MY DEAR MR. CRAWFORD,

"I have got such a villainous head-

ache, with the hot rooms and dancing, I suppose, and have been drinking such strong tea ever since I awoke this morning, that my nerves are rather irritable, I am afraid; and I am not at all in the mood for writing 'the pretty letter' you are looking for.

"Of course, your recommendations came too late. It was impossible to withdraw at the eleventh hour, and upset other people's plans. I had engaged to take part in Mrs. Fairfax Smythe's Louis Quinze Quadrille, and my dress had been made on purpose, as you know. It was very stupid to suppose I could back out, at a moment's notice, though I must say the allusion to the 'other dress' was very well put, and might have melted me, only that I don't like arbitrary edicts of any sort, and have a British aversion to even 'enlightened Despots.' If you so object to my appearing in society under other escort than your own, why didn't you come and take me yourself?

"You were invited, three weeks ago.

"I told you I was cross. Were you

standing by, you would probably shake your wise head, and say, 'See the effects of dissipation!' and read me a homily on late hours. Perhaps it is better you are not here; I confess I feel disposed to quarrel with my own shadow this morning.

"Pray write me a nice letter next time, if you can. I don't see of what use the last could possibly be, except to spoil my pleasure. Of course, though, it had the effect of keeping us each to our old rôles. If I write another word my head will explode, or do something dreadful, and I'm not sure that it wouldn't be your fault if it did.

"Yours very irritably,

"LILIAN."

LETTER V.

"*Tyne Street, North Humberton.*

"DEAR LILIAN,

"You tell me you wrote with a headache. I may say that I answer with something very like a heart-ache (I am not playing with words). How can you read my

letters with such levity, when I write in such sad earnest?

"I think you must have known, that after what I said, I felt sure you would find a pretext for not going to this ball. It is ungenerous to insinuate that I am seeking to find fault. That little passage about our 'old rôles' cuts me to the quick. I think it must have been written without thought. You will recall it, I trust, when next you write, for it is very unjust.

"Come, let us meet each other half way. Let us own that we do not play our rôles (to use your own term) becomingly as lovers. Can we not mend our ways, and each make concessions for the other's sake? These frequent little differences that arise between us are scarcely of good augury for the future. Perhaps I *am* exacting and do not make allowances for your high spirits and the nine years difference in our ages. In any case, write soon and tell me you did not mean to use the expressions that have so pained me.

"Yours affectionately,

"MATHEW CRAWFORD."

LETTER VI.

"St. Leonard's.

"DEAR MR. CRAWFORD,

"It has got into my nose now, and turned to a horrible sniffing cold, (I mean the pain in my head,) so if you find this difficult to read, please remember I am talking through my nose, and all my *p's* and *t's* have turned to *b's* and *d's*.

"I know there was something dreadful in your letter, (I couldn't sleep a wink last night, what with it and my influenza,) but judge of my horror this morning, when I discovered that I had burned it by mistake to light a candle to read by, in the night! What is to be done?

"I have a misty recollection of some terrible passages—that I was called 'un-generous,' and 'unjust,' and I know I was to promise something (not to do it again, I think); but I have no clear idea of anything, except that I was very much in the wrong. There were some horribly mysterious allusions, also, (unless my swollen eyes deceived me,) as to 'the future,' and I am

haunted by the word 'augury,' which I fear meant something very bad—for me.

"I had asked you (if you remember,) for 'a nice letter next time.' What a funny man you are, and what droll notions you must have of things *nice*.

"You would think it 'levity,' no doubt, or I should tell you all about the costumes last Thursday—which were admirable, I must say.

"I cannot help thinking (on sober reflection,) that the ungracious passages I quote, must be the result of my light-headed condition last night, and *cannot* have proceeded from your pen. If, however, I am wrong, write soon '*and tell me you did not mean to use the expressions*' that have so alarmed me.

"Yours in mortal suspense,

"LILIAN VINCENT."

LETTER VII (translated).

"*Tyne Street, North Humberton.*

"DEAR MONSIEUR AUBLAIS,

"I have both good and bad news to send you to-day. My dear mother is ill

again. How I wish I could give her something of my own robust health! Naturally it has put an end, for the present, to those pleasant evenings I told you of in my last, and thrown a gloom over our hearth, which we in vain try to dispel. But, then, again, (and this is my good news,) it has revealed more clearly than ever the kind hearts of our friends. What think you of that severe and singular person, Mr. Mathew Crawford, procuring grapes at some fabulous price because mamma fancied cooling fruit, and positively devoting his evenings to grandpapa, in order to leave me free to nurse my poor invalid? Oh, these English can hide fine qualities under a rough exterior, that is evident. (It is well they do, of course, or what an unamiable race they would be.)

“For example, our landlady: were she as cross as she looks, she would be a monster! But since mamma’s illness, she has been gentle as a lamb, and allowed Madelon to do almost as she likes in her kitchen, though I see what self-control it requires of her. She has still, however, an unpleasant way of

treating us as heretics, and I rather attribute to her agency, a curious visit I received yesterday which will interest you. I must first tell you, that I have been much surprised of late by receiving by post small pamphlets of a religious nature, from some unknown quarter. Yesterday morning, the door opened, and Mrs. Boss ushered in a lady, clad in a sombre dress of a by-gone fashion, who introduced herself as the sender of these same pamphlets, (they had pleased me so little that I had never read more than the first,) and the lady now desired to know when I should like her to commence her visits to my suffering mother. 'In what capacity, madam?' I asked, for really I was not sure at first whether the lady might not be some public religious functionary known in England, from her extremely self-possessed, not to say official manners. I forget the words of her reply; but I felt it to be equivalent to a rebuke, and I was immediately put through a course of close questions as to my views on certain doctrinal points, on which, happily, I have had the advantage of

your instructions, but where, alas ! I could not give always satisfactory answers to my questioner. All this time (the lady stayed nearly an hour,) I was anxiously wanting to put an end to the interview, for I was afraid mamma would awake before her luncheon was ready, and so at last I told the lady, who made some rather impertinent remark about 'food for the soul being of far more importance to my mother than food for the body,' and again she asked me whether she could not see her before she left the house. 'Certainly not, madam,' said I ; 'and, as mamma does not speak English, and I presume you don't know French, I don't see what effect your doing so could have, except to frighten her terribly.' It was rather wicked, perhaps ; but I stared at her bonnet, as I spoke, which was the most frightful object you can conceive. So the lady withdrew, grimly shaking the aforesaid bonnet. Meeting grandpapa on the stairs, she said "*Lisez!*" in a tragic voice, and thrust a packet of pamphlets into his hands, for which, in his innocence, he thanked her with great politeness.

“But to neutralise this unfavourable specimen of our acquaintances here, let me tell you of a most substantial act of kindness that has been done us, and which I ought to have told you of weeks ago. Mr. Bloxham has invested grandpapa’s little property in one of his great commercial undertakings. It came about in this way. Mrs. Bloxham (good soul!) found out one day that grandpapa was receiving a very low rate of interest for his money, and the good woman was so troubled about it, that she would let her husband have no peace until he had invested it for him in some advantageous manner.

“Was not this a truly kind action? The investment is, of course, perfectly safe (it is in a prosperous mining company that pays eight and nine per cent.), and grandpapa’s half-year’s dividends are *larger than his whole income was before*. Is not this delightful? Truly, this England is a money-making country, and its industry is remarkable.

“But I ought to be making *tisane* for my invalid, instead of chatting with my dear old friend, on whose patience I have no mercy.

Good night, dear monsieur. Keep us all in your friendly remembrance, and ever believe me

“Yours gratefully,
“JOSEPHINE ARNOULD.”

CHAPTER XVIII.

MISS VINCENT's last letter had reached Mr. Crawford by the mid-day post, whilst he was in the midst of his day's work. He put the letter aside to read, as soon as he should be free ; for a foreign engineer and a ship's captain were in consultation with him at the moment. As soon as he was alone, he took up the letter with an anxious face. "His last letter would surely have roused Lilian's better feelings, and bring him a fitting response," he told himself, as he broke the seal.

His first impulse on reading what was written, was to send a hot and angry reply, and he sat down and wrote off some dozen lines in the heat of the moment. But then, he laid down the pen, and bethought him, with a sigh, that it was useless to try further

appeals to her feelings ; and he sat with his head resting moodily on his hands, and his work at a stand-still, in a way very unusual with him at this period of the day.

“No woman could behave thus, if she had any love in her heart,” he reflected, with bitterness.

But then Mr. Crawford possibly was not skilled in reading women’s hearts, and could not in the least understand such contradictions as were at work in Lilian Vincent’s. The best thing to do, he told himself, was to imitate her indifference, and not trouble himself more than he could help about a state of things which it was evident he could not alter.

It was under this persuasion that he sat down that evening, when he had returned home to his rooms, to write a lively bantering letter to Miss Vincent, after her own style. But it would not do. He had no talent for that sort of thing, and he tore up the letter in disgust, before it was half finished. Finding himself thoroughly unsettled, he resolved to look in upon his

neighbours, and take a hand at piquet with Monsieur Bertin.

But to-night when he entered Madame Arnould's drawing-room, he found only Madelon there, plying her needle as usual, with the basket of family stockings before her.

"Monsieur Bertin would be back soon; he had gone to return some books to Monsieur le Curé de St. Jude," said Madelon, as she rose from her chair. "Would monsieur take a seat? Madame was very suffering this evening, mademoiselle was reading her to sleep. Should she go and inform them that monsieur was there?"

Mathew begged she would not disturb them, and sat down to await Monsieur Bertin's return. Madelon resumed her work.

Now Mr. Crawford had always felt a strong prejudice against Madame Arnould's servant, since the night when he had beheld her, on the steps of the market-house, keeping watch over the interview taking place within. And yet, now that he looked

calmly and attentively at the face before him, he could not but own that it was an honest face, and one difficult to associate with duplicity and intrigue.

He felt a sense of pain, as he recalled that strange nocturnal interview. It was hard to believe evil of Mademoiselle Josephine now. The close acquaintance of these latter weeks had given him a clearer insight into her character, and had disclosed qualities which had won his admiration, in spite of himself. Her devotion to her mother, her unselfishness (so often put to test by those about her), her industry and courage, had become daily more and more apparent to him. "But then again," as he told himself, sitting there watching Madelon's busy needle, "what did he know of mademoiselle's past history, of her education, and the influences that had been about her in early life?"

"Now was the time, if ever, to gain some light thereon," he suddenly bethought himself. But he naturally shrank from putting questions about the family to their servant.

There could be no harm, however, in a few general inquiries, and so, after a little hesitation, he began (in order to give things a natural air), by asking how she liked England by this time.

"Oh, so so. It's not a bad country," was the reply, delivered with a little shrug.

"And the people—what think you of them?"

"There are good and bad amongst them, it seems, monsieur. Pretty much like our folks at home, I reckon," replied the philosophic woman.

Madelon was not much more garrulous (except with her intimates) than Mr. Crawford himself. He had to try a more direct method.

"You have lived with Madame Arnould many years, I believe?"

"Since mademoiselle was a little infant, monsieur."

"She never had any brothers or sisters, I think?"

"Certainly not. She was the only child, and the pet of the house. Ah, how her

father loved her!" (Madelon was getting on a topic where she was always inclined to enthusiasm.) "He was a great scholar, monsieur, as perhaps you know, and would have done his country honour, had he lived. But to see him play hide and seek with his little daughter! It was hard to say which was the biggest child of the two. Ah, Mon Dieu! Those days will never come back again!"

"And Monsieur Arnould spoiled his daughter, I suppose, and she had her own way with you all, and did pretty much as she liked, eh?"

"No, monsieur," answered Madelon, sharply; "Mademoiselle Josephine was then what she is now—an angel on earth, if ever there was one," and the brown Breton eyes shot fire at the rash questioner.

But Mathew disliked these exaggerated ways of speaking, and would have rather heard that Mademoiselle Josephine had been a good little girl, than an angel, at that period of her life. By way of changing the subject (for the part he was playing did not

sit easily upon him), he asked Madelon whether she did not find the town rather dull?

"We have not so many ways of amusing ourselves in public, as you have in France," he added.

"Amuse one's-self? I should think not!" Madelon could not but laugh at the idea. "People don't think of amusing themselves much here!"

"Well, sometimes we do;" Mr. Crawford stopped a moment, and then added, for the temptation was too strong to resist,—

"For example, when that conjuror was here, a few weeks back—Monsieur Léoni, as he called himself. There would have been amusement for you, and surprise too. You should have gone to see him."

The woman's brown cheek instantly became suffused with colour. She looked up quickly at Mr. Crawford.

"Oh," said she, with a little shrug. "What should I care for conjuring tricks, and such foolery—a woman of my age, monsieur? I've other things to think of.

But I weary you with my talk, and had better go and see after my mistress's supper," and taking up her work-basket, Madelon quitted the room, with some little precipitation.

"She could not bear the allusion," reflected Mathew. "She was embarrassed, and changed colour. What am I to think of it?"

He had by no means made up his mind what to think of it, by the time Mademoiselle Arnould entered the room. She came in with a vase of flowers in her hand — precious flowers at that season, which Mr. Crawford had procured for the invalid's room.

"I always remove them at night," said Josephine, as she shook hands with Mr. Crawford (she had learned to conform so far to English usages), "they say they are not good in a sick-room."

Mademoiselle looked pale, and rather worn; but hers was a face that did not lose its charm, with the loss of colour. Its expression seemed unusually heightened by the look of care in the eyes.

“Mamma does enjoy them so much,” said she, as she put down the flowers, which revealed their loveliness against the background of her dark dress, and even seemed to lighten up the sad face that looked down upon them. “It was very kind of you to send them.”

But Mathew had suddenly grown so embarrassed, whilst mademoiselle was uttering these quite natural words, that he could not reply. Either this person was one of the most consummate actresses in the world, or his own thoughts about her were little short of blasphemy. The utter impossibility of giving utterance to those thoughts confused him, and made him speechless.

“If you will stay a few minutes, grand-papa will be so pleased,” said Josephine, noticing the manner, and thinking it might be a return of the old shyness which had lately worn off in their relations. “I can’t think what keeps him so long; but he is sure to be here soon.”

Mr. Crawford still kept silent, or at least only made such answers as politeness re-

quired. Mademoiselle Josephine took out her knitting and sat down, wondering what had come to their guest, who of late had always found topics of conversation readily enough.

"Can you keep a secret?" said she ere-long, for the sake of saying something.

"A secret?" he asked, with a little start, the word chimed in so strangely with his thoughts.

"Oh nothing very formidable," said Josephine with a smile; "I am making this for grandpapa's birthday." She held up the purse she was knitting. "And I want it to be a surprise."

"Ah, yes, I see."

But Mr. Crawford's interest seemed to have flagged again as suddenly as it had awoke.

"I think," said he, slowly, after a pause, looking at Josephine, but gradually averting his eyes as he spoke, "that the position of people who have a secret on their minds which they are trying to keep from their friends, must be a very painful and a false one."

"Well, not unless it is more important than this," said Josephine, with a smile.

"I mean an important secret, which obliges them to resort to concealment, and to disingenuous courses."

"Naturally, that must be painful."

For a moment, mademoiselle raised her eyes to the speaker's face; then lowered them quickly. She was listening now with close attention.

"There are persons to whom secrecy comes easily," went on Mathew; "who are accustomed to *ruse* and dissimulation; but there are others who seem so frank and truthful, that it is hard to associate them with deceptions of any sort."

"True," said Josephine, but in a voice quite unlike that in which she had spoken a few moments since.

"People in such positions are liable to have wrong interpretations put upon their conduct, and they place themselves in a false position with friends," he added, after a moment's pause. "Do you not agree with me?"

"Certainly," said Josephine. But, in spite of her great efforts to control herself, her voice seemed to cleave to her throat.

There was silence for a minute. Josephine's hand shook so that she was dropping stitches fast. She felt Mr. Crawford's eye upon her, and knew that he was scrutinizing her closely.

"The dangers of such secrets are of course immeasurably greater, where women—young women are concerned," he went on. "It may then be the duty of friends who suspect—that is, who have reason to believe—"

He paused, not well knowing how to go on.

Mademoiselle sat motionless. She seemed suddenly to have regained her composure.

"Proceed," said she, coldly, and in a firm voice; and she laid down her work upon her knee.

He had gone too far to recede now. It must be done, terrible as the task was. Mr. Crawford felt himself turn of a burning heat from head to foot. But he nerved himself up by recalling the facts that were known to him. It was clearly somebody's duty to

ascertain the nature of the acquaintance between Mademoiselle Arnould and the dubious stranger.

"Mademoiselle," said he, rising from his chair with an air of agitation. "You tell me to proceed. But I scarcely know how. Having said what I have done, however, I must go further, and tell you that I am aware of your secret acquaintance with a person who is in every way, I believe, unworthy of any place in your thoughts, or of any influence over you. I am aware also of the meeting that took place between you and this person one evening, some weeks ago. I was a witness—an unwilling witness of that meeting, and since that time I have been greatly troubled——"

But he stopped—literally struck dumb by the expression of Josephine's face as she rose up from her seat and stood there fronting him, with an air of scorn.

"I need not tell you," he hastily stammered out, "that I speak thus out of regard for your interests, and because I would guard you if I could——"

"Stop there, monsieur!" cried Josephine suddenly, and she unconsciously spoke French, in her agitation. "Stop, I forbid you to say another word!" and she drew herself up to her full height, as she stood on the other side of the fire-place, regarding him with her large shining eyes. She was a moment ere she could command herself sufficiently to speak. Then she said:

"I am to understand that you have known of the meeting you allude to, and have chosen to put an evil interpretation on it? Is that it? I am to understand that you think so meanly of me, as to suppose I have contracted some unworthy——"

But she could say no more. Her lips trembled, her figure quivered from head to foot, and hiding her face in her hands, she laid her head upon the mantelpiece, and burst into a passionate flood of tears.

"Mademoiselle! calm yourself, I entreat!" said Mathew, shocked at the agitation he had produced; and, alas! feeling, too late, that he had made some dreadful mistake.

But for a few moments Josephine could

not stem her tears. It was so hard to find herself the object of these suspicions—so hard to think of the light in which she must have been seen all these weeks. And now too, when she was just beginning to think Mr. Crawford their friend, and to care to stand well in his eyes.

“I am not bound, sir, to offer you any justification of my conduct,” said she, proudly, as she raised her head. “You have made a great mistake in addressing me as you have just done. I had thought that you were——”

“One moment, mademoiselle!” interrupted Mathew. “I solemnly assure you that I spoke out of friendship and regard for your welfare. Nothing else could have induced me to say what I have done.” He looked so distressed, that it was impossible to distrust him. Sincerity rarely appeals to sincerity in vain.

“Be it so,” said Josephine more calmly. “You have chosen an odd way of showing your friendship, certainly. I can only tell you that the circumstance you allude to——”

But there was a step on the stairs at that moment.

"There is my grandfather!" said Josephine. "This matter must not be spoken of before him. But if you want further explanations, you had better address yourself to Mr. Handleigh: he knows all, and has done from the first," and with a face yet wet with tears, and an air of wounded dignity, she swept past him, and hurried from the room.

It may be conceived that Mr. Crawford did not prove himself so companionable as usual to Monsieur Bertin that evening, and that he found a pretext for bringing the game of piquet to an early close.

CHAPTER XIX.

“If you want further explanations, you can ask Mr. Handleigh. He knows all, and has done from the first.”

Such were Mademoiselle Arnould's last words, and they rang in Mathew Crawford's ears, and caused them to tingle unpleasantly for hours to come.

It was pretty clear to him that he had committed a serious mistake—indeed (not to shirk the disagreeable admission) that he had made something like a fool of himself. The recollection of mademoiselle's outraged looks dwelt obstinately in his memory, and made him feel very uneasy. She had never looked so well in his eyes, as when she swept past him with that air of wounded pride. He could not help heartily wishing that he

had kept his suspicions to himself a little longer.

It was not very likely that he would address himself to Mr. Handleigh for information. To say nothing of the unpleasantness of explaining the part he had just played; it would look as if he still had doubts about Mademoiselle Arnould. He must be content to let matters rest where they were, with the unsatisfactory conviction that he had deeply offended a person he wished to serve, without getting any nearer knowledge of the mystery he sought to solve.

Some little time elapsed ere he met Mademoiselle Arnould again. For, whenever he called to inquire after her mother's health, he saw no one but Madelon, who received him with a much less gracious air than formerly. Without his quite well knowing how, the game at piquet got transferred to his own rooms; and Mathew was pretty sure this change was owing to Josephine's desire to avoid him.

When next he encountered her it was



under circumstances that entitled him to a little consideration. He had learned that her mother was worse, and he had immediately gone over to Holly Hall to fetch Alice to stay with her.

"Why didn't you send for me before, Josephine?" asked Alice, as they embraced. "I only heard of it from Mathew, who very properly came to fetch me at once, for of course I have come to stay with you, if I may?"

There was a slight softening of Mademoiselle Arnould's manner towards Mr. Crawford as she turned and asked him to sit down. He had done her a service here at least. Whilst the two ladies went upstairs, Mathew was left sitting by the fire-side, recalling the scene that had taken place the last time he sat there.

Ere many minutes, Mademoiselle Arnould reappeared. She came straight up to the fire-place, and standing almost in the same spot where she had stood before, said,—

"You have not addressed yourself to Mr. Handleigh, I find?"

"No. I do not require that. I am contented to know no more than I already know from you."

He said it in good faith; but he could not help reflecting the next moment that he really knew nothing, after all.

"But you must know more, Mr. Crawford," said Josephine, in a firm, cold voice. "For my own sake, I insist upon it. If you will not take the course I asked you to take, I must explain to you myself."

"Not now—some other time, when you are not under the pressure of a great anxiety," urged Mathew.

"No; *now*, Mr. Crawford. Your attack upon me might have waited, perhaps, but my justification of myself cannot wait."

She stopped a moment, and then went on, speaking more often in French than English: "I don't know how much you know of this matter, but I may tell you that the person calling himself Léoni is my second cousin, and his real name is Léon Arnould. His father and mine, both natives of Nîmes, were brought up in the same house, and

were like brothers. Léon's father became a soldier, mine a quiet man of letters; their affection continued through life. When his father died, Léon was a boy of twelve, with no near relation living. My father took charge of him, as he had promised his cousin on his death-bed. I was too young to remember his coming to our house. Almost *the first* thing I can recall, it seems to me, is being carried on Léon's shoulders round the garden, with a great dog barking behind us, and my mother crying out to him to take care of me. He was almost as dear to her, at that time, as a child of her own. I need not—I cannot trace his history. I only know that to me he was always gentle and indulgent, and that very early my father had formed the intention of marrying us, when I should be of a proper age. But ere that time came, all had changed. Léon had forfeited the good opinion of his friends, and not fulfilled the promise of his youth. He had brilliant talents, but had turned them to ill account, and soon ran through the patrimony he had inherited. But he

was young then, and repentance followed. Through the interest of my father's friends an appointment was procured for him in Germany, where——”

Mademoiselle paused.

“It costs me something to make these family disclosures, I confess,” said she; “but you have given me no alternative. And it was there, in Germany, that some other greater shame befell him. I don't know the particulars—it was something which brought him into public notoriety, and which my father felt very bitterly. He was never received in our house again, but was mourned there like a lost son. Since that time, he has been leading a roving life. We have heard of him in America, in Italy, in Egypt, but never to his credit. You may imagine how far he had fallen when I tell you that he forced an interview upon me in Mr. Handleigh's house, to obtain money from me.”

“But you surely refused it?” interrupted Mathew.

“At first, but when I found that he was

desperate, and threatened to apply to Mr. Crawford, whose generosity we have already sufficiently——” Josephine’s lip trembled so that she had to pause again.

“But why did you not let him apply in that quarter? My uncle would have known how to manage such a scoundrel!” said Mathew, indignantly.

“Because, as you may perhaps understand, I was anxious to conceal our disgrace,” said Josephine, with a tinge of hauteur; “the *scoundrel*, you must remember, bears my own name. More than that, I was afraid of his presence being known here. My grandfather is easily carried away by anger; whilst my poor invalid mother, who still mourns over the prodigal in secret, would have been almost broken-hearted to see him so degraded. For I have not yet told you all. He had left the last town he had visited in debt, and was hourly expecting to be arrested, unless he could raise money. Acting on sudden impulse, I told Mr. Handleigh what I have just told you, and he advanced me

the money I required out of my salary, though he tried at first to dissuade me from my purpose. Now you know all, Mr. Crawford, and can form what judgment of my conduct you please."

Mathew was silent. But he was not forming any estimate of her character as Josephine thought; he was engaged in much more practical calculations.

"It was a pity he had the money. He is sure to trouble you again," said Mr. Crawford, looking thoughtfully at the fire. "You must promise to let me know at once, if he does," he added, looking up. "Of course, these demands must be stopped."

But Mademoiselle Arnould made no promise of the sort. She was by no means sure that Mr. Crawford was the person she would care to apply to in such an emergency.

"It is not likely to occur again," said she; "and even if it were——" she hesitated.

"You would not apply to me?" said Mathew, filling up the pause. "Well, I

suppose I deserve it. Mademoiselle Arnould," he added, looking at her earnestly; "I am truly sorry that I have caused you pain. Whatever I may think of the prudence of your conduct,—looking at it, that is, merely from a man's point of view, —I am sure that most women, that any woman of feeling, I may say, would have acted as you have done, and that your motives were good and generous. May I ask you to pardon me, and to believe that I really desired your good, however clumsy may have been my way of showing it?"

He did not say all this straight off, as written, but with hesitations and an embarrassment, which rather heightened than detracted from its effect. But Mademoiselle Arnould made no other reply than an inclination of her head, which might barely pass as a cold acceptance of his apology.

"I wish you good-night, Mr. Crawford. I leave my mother too long," she said, and passed from the room, without vouchsafing any further remark.

CHAPTER XX.

“AND this, then, was all!” reflected Mr. Crawford, as he sat by his fire-side an hour later, ruminating on what he had just heard. Out of such materials as chance had thrown in his way, he had woven together those injurious suspicions which he now blushed to recall.

Yes, it was of no use disguising it, he *had* expected to hear something different from this, and when he contrasted the narrative he had just listened to with that other version of the matter he had constructed in his own mind, Mr. Crawford’s cheek reddened as he sat there alone, and he felt tempted to get up and hasten back to Made-moiselle Arnould’s presence, and, on his knees, entreat her pardon.

But Mr. Crawford was not the man to



act in so romantic or impulsive a manner. He sat and thought over what he had done, with increasing regret and vexation. "A pretty way of showing his regard, forsooth, to wound a woman in such a point! And then to think that, like a blockhead as he was, he had chosen to make this attack (for as such she construed it no doubt) at the very time when she was over-powered with trouble and anxiety."

As for distrusting her story, such an idea never entered into his head—as, indeed, it hardly could have done into any one's, save an utterly stupid and malignant person's. From the moment when, in that first interview, Josephine had laid down her work, and said, "Proceed," in that cold voice, he had known that some satisfactory explanation was at hand. It seemed to him that, in that very instant, his views of her had changed, and that he saw her for the first time in her true light.

Having once clearly discerned his error, it was not enough, with a man like Mr. Crawford, to acknowledge it; he felt he

must henceforth make all possible amends for it. But from this time, Josephine received all his attentions to herself and her mother, with the smallest amount of gratitude that good manners permitted.

"Of course, it was only what he ought to expect," Mathew told himself, and yet he felt vexed and sorry at being thus misunderstood.

It was evident that the recollection of his behaviour rankled in Mademoiselle Arnould's memory, and caused her an ever present sense of humiliation in his presence. Words of bitter meaning would pass her lips at times, which Mathew alone knew how to interpret.

"Oh, yes, I know the style of book," said she, one evening, in reference to a work Mathew was recommending; "but I have not much faith in the generalisations of superficial travellers. Let me see, what is it? 'The Germans are studious and fond of beer,'—'the French are frivolous, but of a lively wit,'—'the Italians are idle and amorous,'—'the English are practical, in-

dustrious, sincere, everything that is honourable,' in short."

She looked straight across at Mathew as she spoke, and added,

"I think that is what the book amounts to?"

At one time he would have been prepared to take up cudgels for the author, and try to show that, in the main, the characteristics of each country had been hit upon; but a new diffidence held him silent to-night.

The conversation was taking place in Mr. Handleigh's drawing-room, where a few friends were assembled. It was the last social evening of the sort, in which Josephine was to take a part for long to come. Her mother's health declined rapidly within the next few weeks.

Madame Arnould found herself the object of many attentions during her illness; but some of them were of a sort that surprised and embarrassed the poor lady. There seemed to be a general impression amongst her neighbours and friends that, as far as her

spiritual concerns went, Madame A. was "in a very bad way." For instance, Mrs. Crawford "was so concerned," as she expressed it, "that poor madame was not within the pale of our beloved church;" and she was sure "something ought to be done." So she took to visiting Madame Arnould, with her Church of England prayer-book in hand, which she made the text book of copious discourses, and Mrs. Crawford would grow quite eloquent as she expatiated on "our beautiful liturgy," a phrase which she always uttered with much unction. But the sight of that velvet-bound prayer-book would work up the invalid to such a state of nervous disquiet that the doctor had to interfere, and Mrs. Crawford's visits—as a spiritual director—were prohibited.

About this time the lady of the sombre garments, made her appearance again, and was even more difficult to rout than before. She made no mention of prayer-books or liturgies, but had a prevailing impression on her mind (of which it was extremely hard to disabuse her) that they—the Arnould family

—were in some way or other “in league with Rome,” and that it was her bounden duty to release them from their “chains of superstition,” &c.

When at last Mademoiselle Arnould had clearly demonstrated to her that they were not Romanists, but members of a Protestant Church, the lady only shook her head and said,—


“Ah, but churches will not save us, you know.” Nor did she seem to derive much satisfaction from hearing that Mr. Handleigh regularly visited them.

“He is a worthy person, but he relies too much on works,” said the lady, gloomily, and she intimated her own opinion that Mr. Handleigh was a very unsafe guide for sinners.

But notwithstanding this eminent person’s authority, Mr. Handleigh’s ministrations were highly valued by his French friends, in their hour of sorrow. He met them on that common ground which exists between all Christian communities, and sought to quicken their faith and love and submission, without

any reference to sects or churches, or attempts to proselytize. And as they listened, his hearers felt that the Religion he taught was the Divine one instituted, not for a nation nor a system, but for the comfort and elevation of the whole human race,—the Religion, in short, which is but imperfectly understood wherever its followers assert any exclusive comprehension of its tenets, or exclusive right to its benefits and consolations.

As Madame Arnould's condition, though precarious, did not warrant the apprehension of immediate danger, and as Mrs. Crawford found her efforts to bring her to an orthodox frame of mind less successful than she could have expected, she "saw no reason," as she informed her family, "why their promised visit to Hastings, which had already been postponed, should be longer delayed." Alice begged hard to be allowed to remain behind with Josephine, but her mother would not hear of it, and even Mr. Crawford thought Alice had better accompany them, for he was to follow his family in a few days, and he



always liked to have his youngest daughter with him.

"And what pretty message are we to take to Lilian?" asked Mrs. Crawford, in her artless way, of Mathew, who was dining with them the evening before their departure.

"I have no message. She will get a letter from me before you arrive," said Mathew, briefly.

"Ah, then my poor words would be quite eclipsed, and lose all effect, of course."

"They would scarcely produce the same effect, I imagine," said Mathew, with a sombre look that quite startled his aunt.

It is to be feared that if Mrs. Crawford could have seen the letter alluded to, she would have felt strongly inclined to box her nephew's ears on the spot. This was what Mathew had written that same morning.

"MY DEAR LILIAN,

"I cannot withdraw what I have said. Every word of my last was written deliberately—I may say guardedly. I have

felt all that I speak of, and more, whether you believe it or not. It is of course impossible for me to come over to St. Leonards next Thursday; on that day, my uncle follows his family, to remain a fortnight, and we cannot both be absent at this busy time.

"You ask if things are 'tending to a crisis,' and want to know whether 'I am paving the way to a rupture.' You should know me better than this, I think. If I were not used to your wild and random (but very thoughtless and sometimes cruel) ways of speech, I should regard that as an affront that a man ought not to let pass. In all seriousness I would remind you, that *two* can play this game of indifference; but it seems to me a very dangerous game, and one which, sooner or later, must end in that catastrophe which your own words (but neither my words nor acts) have foreshadowed as a possible termination to matters.

"I write this with a pain and reluctance which I fear you will not credit me with.

"Yours very sincerely,

"MATHEW CRAWFORD."



To which letter (received and answered ere Mrs. Crawford and her daughters had arrived) there came the following reply by return of post :

“DEAR MATHEW,

“I *do* credit you with it, and with a hundred other good qualities in which I have no share. I have gone too far this time. There! I own it. I am not altogether what my letters—my own words and acts at times—would make me out to be. I have feelings hidden somewhere within me, and these feelings sometimes prompt me to——. But what matters! You think me a heartless flippant sort of person (don't you?), and I'm not sure you are far wrong. But if you, wise man and clear-sighted, could see me at this present hour, you would own—well, at least, that I can be uncommonly miserable—yes, quite as much so, I dare say, as ever you are in those sad moments about which you are so eloquent, and which you tell me you owe entirely to the mis-

conduct of that old and I fear hardened offender,

“LILIAN VINCENT.

“P.S. What odd letters we are getting to write! Suppose we each invest in a copy of ‘The Polite Letter Writer,’ and see if we can’t improve our style, which threatens to become quite tragical if we go on at this rate.”

END OF VOL. I.

1. The first part of the document is a list of names and addresses of the members of the committee.

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1. The first part of the document is a list of names and titles, including "The Hon. Mr. Justice" and "The Hon. Mr. Justice".



